



Building Influence and Leading Change to Connect K-12 and Postsecondary Systems of Learning at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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**Building Influence and Leading Change to Connect K-12 and Postsecondary
Systems of Learning at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

**Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)
Capstone**

Submitted by

John Garcia III

**To the Harvard Graduate School of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Leadership**

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Acknowledgements

For as long as I can remember my life has been a story of “transitions”; moving from school to school, transferring to Arizona State University from the local community college, and making the jump from the business sector to the education sector. Working for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on a K-12/postsecondary transitions project was a fitting experience and one that I will never forget.

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Dr. Garcia may always sound strange to me, but I know this is just beginning. I came to Ed.L.D. to learn how to make an even greater impact on the system. I will continue to be relentless in pursuit of a better education system and devoted to making this world a better place for children and families.

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Abstract

This capstone documents a strategic project at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation aimed at increasing college readiness and postsecondary success by creating greater alignment and shared collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary systems within the education sector. The core of the strategic project included an analysis culminating in a system-wide framework, theory of action, and set of potential investments focused on the student transition from K-12 to postsecondary. The project also entailed efforts to move forward in operationalizing the analysis as a set of recommendations once authority was received from leadership. The recommendations focused on the external components of grantmaking activities and internal structures necessary to develop the type of collaborative partnerships within the foundation that is desired between systems in the field. A new portfolio of investments shared between the College Ready (K-12) and Postsecondary (PS) divisions were posited as entry points to creating synergies across the foundation.

Due to the separate divisions of work, both groups had become accustomed to working in silos with no formal method for communication, collaboration and shared innovation. Throughout the research process it became clear that many interventions being funded in either the College Ready or Postsecondary teams had potential applicability across sectors. More importantly, developments in both education sectors regarding the maturity of the Common Core State Standards and postsecondary accountability have created windows of opportunity across the country. Given the intent of the foundation's leadership to use the strategic project as a learning opportunity to

explore new areas of investment, this capstone explores the leadership skills necessary to build influence and lead a change management effort to go from silo-oriented investments to a cross-divisional grantmaking structure in the K-12/PS transitions space.

The review of knowledge for action included in this capstone outlines the principles of effective student transitions across K-12 and postsecondary, and change management. The analysis describes external areas of best practice, the internal culture of the foundation, and the application of change management skills necessary to drive change within the foundation context. The strategic project's limited impact to drive a K-12/PS transitions strategy is traced back to foundation's internal leadership changeover, resistance to change, the role of the resident, and the passage of the ESSA. The implications section of this capstone identifies the necessary organizational structures for effective collaboration across divisions, such as authority from leadership, processes/procedures, communications vehicles, and accountability measures. This capstone concludes with the recognition that philanthropy can play a role in supporting systems of collaboration and alignment in the field by convening new partners, supporting the research necessary for leaders to make informed decisions, and creating philanthropic partnerships to drive scale.

Introduction

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: A Maturing Organization

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is the world's largest private foundation, with an endowment of \$44 billion as of April 2016. The foundation was established in 2000 and has differing domestic and international areas of focus. In developing countries, it concentrates on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, the focus is to ensure all people, especially those with the fewest resources, have access to opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. The foundation's United States Program (USP), involves the improvement of the country's education system at both the K-12 and postsecondary¹ levels. To provide a better understanding of the organizational environment at the start of my Ed.L.D. strategic project during the 2015-2016 school year, I review the foundation's educational evolution over the years, and how this produced opportunities and challenges for a new area of focus.

The foundation has been active in education – particularly, K-12 – for the past 17 years, 7 of those focused on the current strategy. Prior investments related to technology in schools and the promotion of “small schools” were found to have mixed results, leading to a shift in organizational focus. In 2008, new College Ready² director, Vicki Phillips, altered the K-12 strategy to center on systems to support effective teaching, the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, and most recently, technology interventions and systems that promise

¹ The terms “postsecondary” and “college” will be used interchangeably.

² College Ready refers to the K-12 division of the foundation.

to personalize learning in schools at scale. On the postsecondary front, the foundation has focused on improving developmental education, the adoption of state-level higher education policies focused on student completion, and growing forms of online instruction in 2-year and 4-year institutions that promise personalized learning at scale.

Attempts at Alignment

Considering that the goal of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is to ensure all students have access to a robust, highly personalized learning experience leading to a postsecondary degree or credential with labor market value, there are a number of challenges that remain for both the College Ready and Postsecondary divisions to be successful in reaching their ultimate goal. One challenge identified was the need to approach student success as an education pipeline that ensures the seamless progression of students, leading to a timely and affordable degree.

The term “K-12/PS transition” is used internally by the foundation to describe the strategic project focus as efforts that assist the successful movement from secondary to postsecondary education. Past and current investments in the K-12/PS transition space have been stop-and-go and include examples such as early college high schools, the Facebook college knowledge challenge, college match interventions, financial aid texting solutions, and high school redesign. Although the evidence has been mixed for many of these investments, there is an ample amount of knowledge that can be harvested from these efforts. Previous attempts to develop a strategy in the K-12/PS transitions arena have resulted in a small number of grants focused on additional exploration. However,

developments in the field – such as the maturity of the Common Core State Standards and related assessments, in combination with mounting pressure for higher education accountability – have created local partnerships between high schools and institutions of higher education aimed at reducing remediation and providing affordable postsecondary options for students. The combination of these developments may provide new opportunities for the development of a specific K-12/PS transitions investment strategy that can enhance the success of such efforts.

Ed.L.D. Residency

Increasing the number of underrepresented students with postsecondary degrees has been a personal passion of mine since my switch from the business world to the education world. After five years in the private sector, I saw the power of a college education, but I also saw the lack of diversity represented in the business sector. I attributed this to an education system that was not preparing enough low-income, first-generation, and ethnic minority students to access and succeed in higher education. So, when the opportunity came to lead a strategic project for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation focused on a high school to postsecondary transitions project, it felt like a perfect match between my passions and previous experience.

Attempting to create greater connections and collaborations across the foundation's K-12 and Postsecondary divisions is by no means a new endeavor. I had personally heard of previous failed attempts to systematically bring both divisions together within the Gates Foundation from my time working at a state agency. However, I found the current commitment from the director of policy at

the foundation and the opportunity to work with a team of individuals already committed to the work as signs that the organization was truly interested in pursuing a path moving forward with the intent to help students prepare for, access opportunities and succeed across the K-12 and higher education divide.

My strategic project at BMGF attempted to increase college readiness and postsecondary success by creating greater alignment and shared collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary systems within the education sector. The core of the work included a review and synthesis of developments in the K-12/postsecondary transition space. The resulting analysis was to culminate in a system-wide framework, theory of action, and set of potential investments focused on transitions and alignment. And lastly, we were to move as far forward as possible in operationalizing a set of recommendations, including testing a selected number of solutions through new investments during the residency.

The literature on philanthropy's ability to improve greater K-12 and postsecondary alignment and student transitions across systems remains nascent. This Ed.L.D. capstone will attempt to fill a gap of knowledge by demonstrating how the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation engaged in developing an investment strategy to create greater collaboration across systems to promote shared problem-solving, a set of effective student interventions, and policy alignment between education systems. In order to explain how this project relates to the broader field of student transitions across K-12 and postsecondary systems and the role of philanthropy within this space, my Review of Knowledge for Action (RKA) draws insights from three main bodies of evidence:

K-12/higher education transition and alignment, strategic philanthropic giving, and change management.

Review of Knowledge for Action (RKA)

Over the last few decades, a number of education reforms have come and gone, hoping to respond to the threat of global competition and the evolving knowledge-based economy. The dominant model for schools was developed for an industrial society, where jobs on the shop floor and lifelong positions on the industrial assembly line only required a high school diploma (Lawson, 2014). In this era, a K-12 education was a method for social efficiency, capable of providing an entry to the middle class and a manner for increasing social and economic mobility to those deemed capable (Tyack, 1974). Today, there is a growing awareness that these low-skill, high-work discipline jobs are fast disappearing and unlikely to return. Labor experts at Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce (2010) predict that by 2018, nearly two-thirds of jobs – some 63 percent – will require some college or a 2-year associate's degree. Unfortunately, overall gains in U.S. college attainment have stalled while other countries have continued to increase their number of citizens with college degrees. In 1990, the U.S. ranked first in the world in 4-year degree attainment among 25-34 year olds; in 2012, the U.S. ranked 12th (OECD, 2013). As a result, consensus is growing that high school graduation no longer constitutes the education goal line (Theokas, 2010). Therefore, the new paradigm of education is one that incorporates both K-12 and higher education as one seamless system that ensures all students have the skills necessary to succeed in a new and rapidly evolving world.

As the education landscape has shifted, so too have the aspirations and actions of students, with greater percentages of students intending to complete some form of postsecondary education. From 1980 to 2002, the share of 10th

graders who aspired to earn at least a bachelor's degree rose from 41 percent to 80 percent (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Unfortunately, a great number of students graduate from high school without the level of academic readiness or habits of mind necessary for success at the college level. Significant gaps in the academic and non-academic preparation that persist between low-income, racial/ethnic minority groups and other student populations leads to persistent racial, ethnic and socioeconomic inequality in college access and attainment (Hill, Bregman & Andrade, 2015). According to the 2009 NAEP, only 38 percent of 12th-grade students performed at or above the proficient level on NAEP's reading assessment, and only 26 percent, were at or above the proficient level in mathematics (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Students also need timely and accurate information and guidance that is often related to social capital (Sandefur, Meir, & Campbell, 2006; Roderick, Nagoaka, Coca & Moeller, 2008; Farmer-Hinton, 2008). Although college access efforts have led to an increase in the college-going rates of students, there are significant concerns surrounding college completion, especially as it pertains to low-income, ethnic minority youth (Carnevale & Strohl, 2010). While half of all people from high-income families have a bachelor's degree by age 25, just 1 in 10 people from low-income families do (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Fewer than 60 percent of new students graduate from 4-year colleges within 6 years, and at many institutions the graduation rates are far worse (Hess, et al., 2009). Increasingly, there is a growing awareness of the limitations of the traditional and current structures that promote student success within and across both K-12 and postsecondary education systems.

The seamless transition of students across the education pipeline calls for greater academic preparation and transition supports, particularly for

underrepresented students. The Gates Foundation portfolios in K-12 and postsecondary education reflect two very different theories of action – one focused on professionalization, and the other focused on systems and institutional change. Therefore, there is no coherent design of cross-aligned strategies aimed at the successful transition of students to and through postsecondary education. This suggests a need within BMGF to create key connections within and across strategies that builds upon previous and current investments on the College Ready, Postsecondary and Advocacy teams and expands upon the nascent work in the K-12/PS transition space. Consequently, it is important to understand how to effectively structure and align the transition strategy and lead a collaborative effort focused on creating effective investments at scale.

This chapter will examine the intersection between important bodies of research: K-12/postsecondary transition and alignment, strategic philanthropic giving, and change management, in an effort to answer four critical questions to inform the Gates Foundation’s investment strategy as it pertains to USPAC:

- What is the relationship between K-12/postsecondary alignment and student outcomes?
- How can systems best pursue cross-sector collaboration and alignment in the public policy space?
- What are the strategic philanthropic giving elements necessary to develop internal cross-strategy alignment and transition investments?

- What are the elements of change management strategy necessary to break down silos across the education sector and within a large philanthropic organization like BMGF?

Student Outcomes Across the Education Pipeline

The seamless transition of students is often characterized by college readiness, college access and college success that together represent the education pipeline. Throughout each stage of transition there are a number of academic, informational, social, and financial challenges impacting the likelihood of student success.

College readiness is commonly defined as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college program without requiring remediation (Conley, 2007). Although there is no singular assessment to determine how many students meet this standard, a number of measures demonstrate that high numbers of students are falling short – PISA, NAEP, ACT, SAT, PARCC, and Smarter Balanced. The reasons why more students are not academically ready for college are highly complex, related to individual circumstances, and both academic and non-academic. Academically, there are numerous studies show the disconnect between what high school teachers teach and what postsecondary instructors expect as college ready preparation for credit-bearing courses in college (Venezia & Jaegar, 2013). Additionally, many schools only offer a limited arrangement of advanced college-preparatory coursework, including AP/IB, creating an opportunity gap. Concurrently, non-academic factors such as the lack of social and cultural capital related to expectation setting, the ability to participate in enrichment activities, or receiving

the additional support needed to overcome barriers can also affect college readiness (Perna & Titus, 2005). And finally, college readiness can be influenced by non-cognitive factors, described by David Conley (2003) as habits of mind necessary to succeed in college including critical thinking, an inquisitive nature, a willingness to accept critical feedback, an openness to possible failure, and the ability to cope with frustrating and ambiguous learning tasks.

Despite the various barriers associated with high school completion and college readiness, college entry rates are at an all-time high. Women, minorities, and individuals from low-income backgrounds are enrolling in college at higher rates than previously seen and are projected to have the highest levels of growth over the next decade (NCES, 2013). Yet, there are persistent racial and socioeconomic gaps in college enrollment and issues of socioeconomic stratification with respect to the type of institutions students attend. Poorly informed decisions at the point of college entry may contribute to negative college outcomes; with students buried in debt and with poor employment outcomes (Turner, 2014). Thus improving the quality of information available to families may contribute to better decision making when it comes to selecting institutions based on value, fit, and outcomes. Moreover, financial aid plays a role in college choice and ultimately college persistence. Research indicates that low-income students are the least likely to complete the FAFSA, even though they are the most in need of financial aid (King, 2004). The most recent study by Mark Kantrowitz (2009), estimated that about 40 percent of all undergraduate students do not complete a FAFSA and about one-quarter of the non-FAFSA filers would be eligible for a federal grant. Furthermore, students from low-

income backgrounds often have less experience with college and are underprepared to navigate the complexities of entry policies.

For many students, their first year in postsecondary education is marked by a need to participate in remedial courses. When considering all first-time high school graduates, studies have found that anywhere from 28 to 40 percent of students enroll in at least one remedial course. For community college students, several studies have found remediation rates surpassing 50 percent (NCSL, 2015). This often leads to additional time to degree and the potential use of precious financial aid resources. A U.S. Department of Education study found that only 17 percent of students enrolled in remedial reading and 27 percent of students enrolled in remedial math earn a bachelor's degree (Sparks & Malkus, 2013). Subsequently, students face a period of social transition and often face identity and social/emotional challenges related to attending college (Tinto, 1993; Tierney, 1992). Many efforts are intended to ease the transition to college, such as early college high school, dual enrollment, counseling, and advising services, which range from academic preparation to psychosocial and behavioral supports. While each intervention emphasizes different aspects of college readiness and transition supports, the strength of each specific intervention lies in its ability to target specific outcomes for subgroups of students (e.g., raising college expectations, increasing the number of college applications). Capacity limitations can affect the extent to which interventions can be scaled. Subsequently, over the last decade, interest has grown in creating more systemic, comprehensive and policy-oriented approaches to the successful transition of students across systems.

K-12/Postsecondary Public Policy Alignment

Despite the growing evidence that an integrated approach to postsecondary readiness, seamless transition and attainment is crucial, the system functions and innovates in distinct divisions – K-12 and postsecondary – that operate independently of each other and fail to properly communicate their mutual expectations regarding the knowledge and skills students must master (Chamberlin & Plucker, 2003). In a report entitled, *Path to Alignment* (2013), Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of the Lumina Foundation, refers to the issue as one of clarity, and compares it to an annual eye exam, one in which you peer through the viewfinder and see two parallel images that only become clear and coherent once the optometrist creates the correct stack of lenses. For example, how might students in a K-12 school that employs an interdisciplinary project-based model of assessment be deemed “college ready” if their local higher education institutions require SAT scores and grades in traditional subject areas? How might a K-12 school that focuses on social/emotional learning and academic behaviors as well as core subject content knowledge fair in a state exit exam that is highly focused on math and reading scores? If both systems are innovating separately without any semblance of coordination, then misalignment impacts the ability of a student to transition from one system to another. An old adage says, “What gets tested is what gets taught.” Tony Wagner (2014) believes that we need a broader agreement on the education outcomes that matter the most and an accountability system aligned with those outcomes. In essence, he is calling for what Merisotis is: clarity and alignment in order for the system to be seamless and focused throughout. Cross-strategy alignment efforts create greater

opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and shared innovation leading to a more seamless and focused system.

One cause given for the inadequate state of academic readiness and postsecondary success may be the absence of a “P-16” or “P-20”³ approach to education, which ensures the smooth and efficient movement of students from preschool through postbaccalaureate education (Perna & Armijo, 2014). The absence of a P-20 approach is evident in the continued lack of alignment in curricular requirements and assessments between K-12 and higher education (Conley, 2013; Kirst & Usdan, 2009; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Venezia, et al., 2005). The resulting outcomes of such unaligned education systems are high schools and colleges that develop curricula and assessments independently. This stems from uncoordinated governance and policymaking functions, and results in misalignment between academic expectations of students (Perna & Armijo, 2014). SUNY professor Hal Lawson (2013) contends that today’s suboptimal outcomes derive predictably from a fragmented system that is perfectly designed to mass-produce them.

Although several states have sought policy-oriented solutions to align their K-12 and higher education systems – such as through curricular and assessment alignment and appointing secretaries of education with responsibilities for both K-12 and higher education – none have proliferated to the extent of the P-16 Council (also known as the P-20 Council) (Kirst & Usdan, 2009). P-16 systems aim to smooth transitions between the different levels of education and the workforce, and usually involve collaborations linking

³ P-16 and P-20 will be used interchangeably.

preschool education, K-12 education, and higher education, with major roles played by state agencies, state legislatures and businesses (Chamberlin & Plucker, 2008). Typically, the goals of P-16 systems include reducing achievement gaps and better preparing students for all levels of education (Water & Krueger, 2002). To achieve these goals usually involves enhancing preparation for college through a rigorous high school curriculum, aligning high school graduation requirements with postsecondary admissions requirements, and strengthening teacher preparation programs and professional development for veteran instructors so that every classroom has a highly qualified teacher (Barth, 2003; Venezia, Kirst & Antonio, 2003).

As of 2008, 40 states had P-16 (or P-20) councils, although the levels, authority and objectives of each council vary considerably (Perna & Armijo, 2014). Determining the success/ effectiveness of P-16 councils is challenging, given the many other initiatives that are frequently in place at the same time and the wide range of goals that councils in different states choose to address (Perna & Armijo, 2014). Yet, despite the undertakings of these various initiatives, P-16 councils have produced relatively few policy changes (Hightower, 2008; Kirst & Usdan, 2009; Perna & Finney, 2014; Shulock, 2009). This may be due to the fact that nearly all councils are advisory only and have no formal authority to create or enforce policy. Nevertheless, P-16 councils have been credited with improving communication and collaboration across education agencies. However, councils must avoid the barriers associated with overcoming political tensions and historical patterns, address issues of power and control among state education agencies, and recognize the semiautonomous nature of colleges and universities (Rochford, 2007). Altogether, P-16 councils have shown positive results when it

comes to creating a shared system-wide agenda, and improving intra-agency coordination. However, P-16 councils have had limited success in changing public policies aimed at creating a more cohesive educational system. The story of P-16 councils gives fair warning to the adaptive complexities of aligning a silo-oriented system that has different goals, structures, incentives, funding systems, and regulatory oversight.

Calls for Greater Collaboration in the Field

In light of these challenges, some researchers, such as Frederick M. Hess of the American Enterprise Institute, call for more from P-16 reform than simply system-wide alignment that includes longitudinal data systems, curricula alignment, and standards. Hess (2008) contends that while these efforts are well intentioned and sensible, their proponents are overly optimistic that appending such changes to existing systems will deliver the desired results. Moreover, he speaks to the outer limits of changes to policy and practice that warn of crafting standards or alignment of expectations as an end to itself – while paying little attention to how these efforts are implemented or translated into practice. Hess challenges P-16 efforts to engage in creative problem solving rather than stitch sometimes distinct enterprises together into a patchwork quilt.

Lawson (2013) also contends that desirable outcomes will not be achieved until new education systems are in place that require every organization stakeholder to come to grips with the fact that they are part of the problem and need to work together to become part of the solution. Lawson calls for a third-generation “partnership system” focused on systems change and public policy intervention. Third-generation partnerships are configured to address adaptive

and even wicked problems for which there is no ready solution, through knowledge generation developed to continuously improve public policy, educational practice, and new institutional designs (Lawson, 2009). Lawson calls for a Cradle-Through-Career system that focuses on the development of education systems, whereas as P-16 systems focus on connecting systems of schooling.

Most notably, the “partnership system” approach includes anywhere, anytime learning, and competency development while developing innovative mechanisms for accounting for such learning and rendering them as employment-related resources. Subsequently, these aims call for a variety of innovations that can include joint high school/college pathways, early college, high school graduation tests that double as college admissions tests, competency-based education, and new models that require new types of collaborative partnerships.

Philanthropy’s Role in Innovation Across the Education Pipeline

Over the last several years, many education funders have shifted from making siloed investments to more systemic solutions focused on repairing the leaky education pipeline (Grantmakers for Education, 2012). Although investments continue to be made along the various areas of the pipeline, such as preK-3, elementary, high school, and higher education, many have sought to make a more systemic change by focusing on alignment. This works well for funders and often plays to their strengths as conveners working to forge partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholder groups. The Ford

Foundation has used the Constituency Building for Public School Reform (CPSR) model – aimed at creating inclusive coalitions capable of creating political energy to sustain reform and influence public officials – for nearly 13 years, with often mixed results. New systems of learning will call for greater curricular and assessment alignment, aligning high school graduation with postsecondary admissions requirements, and reducing time to graduation, but doing so through the development of a new integrated education system.

In light of hierarchical structures, bureaucracy and oversight in the education sector, philanthropic giving has sought to spur innovation, fresh ideas and entrepreneurial efforts that are unable to flourish under a morass of regulation. Although there have been countless innovations, programs, new organizations and large-scale efforts supported by foundations, education philanthropists have often faced criticism for their ineffectiveness (Reckhow, 2014). Most educational philanthropy is carried out in a way that is very unlikely to have wide-reaching effect. This is often referred to as “low-leverage” giving that includes money for activities that institutions would likely engage in anyway using public dollars, such as professional development or programs (Hess, 2005). One of the most widely cited examples of an unsuccessful effort in K-12 includes the \$500 million Annenberg Challenge that took place in Los Angeles and New York in the 1990s and provided grants to support locally developed education reforms. Similarly, in higher education, low-leverage giving typically includes money directed towards increased access to college through scholarships and grants, and more services and enrichment opportunities for students once they arrive on campus. Considering the shortcomings of this approach, grantmakers have sought new methods to

influence systemic reform primarily by undergoing a fundamental change in behavior.

The New Model of Strategic Philanthropy

Considering the growing complexity of the education landscape, an evolutionary shift is taking place in philanthropy that has the broad potential to impact greater levels of systemic reform in K-12 and higher education. Strategic philanthropy seeks to accomplish philanthropic goals by requiring great clarity about what those goals are and specifying indicators of success before beginning a philanthropic project. It requires designing a strategic work plan, commensurate with the resources committed to it, and an empirical, evidence-based understanding of the context in which the plan will operate. These factors are regarded as the essential core of strategic philanthropy – the concern with measuring impact (Brest & Harvey, 2010). Peter Frumkin (2008) of the University of Chicago, describes a world where donors seek to create value. In doing so, they are confronted with a number of theories about how to best achieve their intended impact. Frumkin categorizes these theories into three main components: theories of change, theories of leverage, and theories of scale. All three theories are interconnected, where choices in one category impact the next. Altogether, all three theories combined form what is known as a logic model.

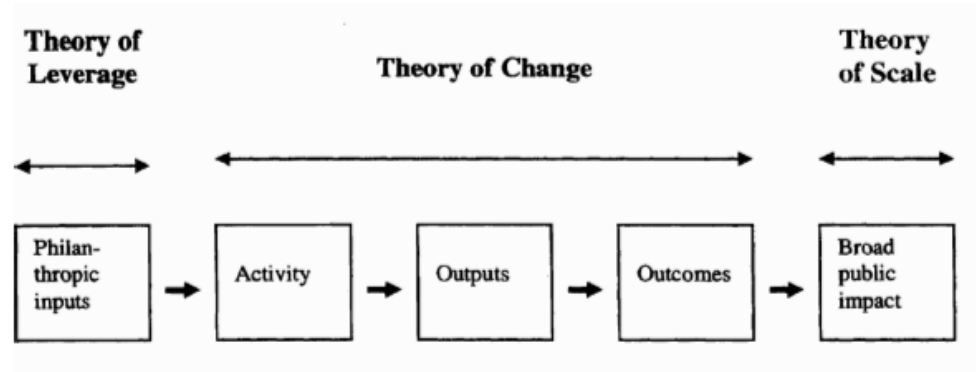


Figure 1. Frumkin's Logic Model

Clarity in the logic model often begins with a theory of change by listing the set of choices about how to direct giving in order to directly impact a chosen unit of society. Theories of change fall across a large spectrum that can include everything from the training of individual leaders to shaping public policy in order to bring about different levels of change. Examples of distinct theories of change are evident throughout philanthropic efforts in the field of K-12 public education. The Broad Foundation has experimented with an approach that focuses on training individuals for leadership, with the belief that change occurs through the impact of individuals. New Schools Venture Fund has moved forward with a specific approach that provides management and assistance to organizations with a goal of creating stronger organizations and more sustainable capacity. The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation has sought to drive change in American public education through research and policy analysis aimed at identifying school challenges, causes of their problems, and new solutions. Most recently, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative has been structured as an LLC to enable the organization to fund non-profit organizations, make private investments and participate in policy debates. Many of these theories of change

are not mutually exclusive and are frequently pursued simultaneously, creating a series of choices that can be made to pursue a set of particular goals. Considering their own financial and capacity constraints, philanthropic entities must make decisions based on the most reasonable approach for the problem they are working to solve.

Theories of leverage are different from theories of action in that they seek to increase the effectiveness of giving. Because the amount of money available to most funders is limited, donors use a number of different tools – grantmaking tactics, programmatic tactics – to maximize the impact of their contributions. Grantmaking tactics include project grants, matching grants, requests for proposal, technical assistance, and capacity building grants, among others. Programmatic tactics, on the other hand, restrict the use of philanthropic inputs to a special class of activities. Examples of these activities include, geographical support of communities, funding pilot programs, funding independent evaluations, etc. One important distinction made by Frumkin is the issue of measurement and two different understandings of the meaning of leverage. *Social leverage* creates benefits greater than the size of the gift. *Financial leverage* means that more resources have been marshaled. One caution is that creating greater financial leverage does not necessarily mean those resources are used wisely. Thus, philanthropic entities must work to clarify which is being created and what this means in relation to creating change in a profound manner.

Being effective, in the strategic sense, also involves reaching as many people as possible by amplifying the impact of one intervention to create lasting and significant impact. Frumkin (2008) states that scale has at least five overlapping meanings in philanthropy; 1) financial strength, 2) program

expansion, 3) comprehensiveness, 4) multisite replication, and 5) accepted doctrine. The first two meanings connect organizational strength and the breadth of scope, usually measured by the number of clients being served. Non-profits and funders generally see program expansion as a high return, low-risk method of scale that allows an organization with a proven track record to expand its operation. Scale as comprehensiveness and multisite replication operationalizes a network-based theory of change. Comprehensiveness brings together a coordinated set of activities and interventions for clients and communities. Achieving scale in this sense requires weaving together disparate programs and efforts into an integrated whole, whereas replication allows for the reconstruction of the essential elements of a successful initiative or model. This typically takes place through a franchise model or through independent efforts to create similar programs. Clearly this approach can achieve scale quickly and provides a certain level of autonomy to organizations. However, this approach can also be difficult to achieve uniformity and centralization. Finally, scale as an accepted doctrine can be achieved by formulating and dispersing an idea or concept. Doctrinal shifts involve the penetration of opinion elites and non-profit leaders. Shifts can come from a number of sources including think tanks, university researchers, or organizational leaders who can express a clearly articulated concept that supports their efforts. Pursuing a doctrinal method of scale is appealing to funders since it is not limited to an organization receiving the funding, but the outcomes of this method are difficult to predict. Sometimes efforts can be widely embraced and adopted, and other times efforts can find no followers. All three of these mechanisms, in combination, are at the heart of strategy development aimed at improving the practice of giving in the

philanthropic space. Subsequently, all three mechanisms should be conceived as an integrated system aimed at creating social impact.

While a logic model, theory of change, theory of leverage and theory of scale can help donors understand their implicit assumptions, Frumkin (2008) believes context is incredibly important in determining the model. He speaks to the danger of simplification related to causality. Although simplification can be necessary to determine how to address change, causality will tend to appear stronger than it really is, especially in cases where funds are used to address large public problems. There are many factors that donors simply cannot foresee or control that impinge on the results. Therefore, it is important for donors to understand that there are many intervening and competing variables at work. Ultimately, Frumkin(2008) believes the definitive rationale for a logic model is not the framework for evaluation, but the reflection and modeling that funders need to understand the objectives driving their giving. Logic models and the over-professionalization of giving can render the art of giving into a dry and rigid technical chore that moves away from a more personal form of giving that connects the donor's passions and values to community needs. Thus, logic models can be helpful tools, but they must be assessed for their plausibility and best thought of as an exercise for donors seeking a way to both act on private values and meet public needs.

Reflecting the Collaboration Called for in the Field through Internal Organization

In order to understand how the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation can enhance their strategic grantmaking ability aimed at improving K-

12/postsecondary transitions and alignment by reflecting the coordination they desire in the field, I review how silos can be broken down within organizations. Currently, the College Ready (K-12) and Postsecondary divisions operate as distinct units with limited examples of collaboration across divisions. Like most silos, these were created to provide greater effectiveness and efficiencies for a particular area of expertise. Information often flows up and down within these structures and prevents the flow of information outward that allows for decisions to be made across distinct divisions of work. Silos create an environment where sharing and collaborating for anything other than one silo's special interest is virtually impossible (Govindarajan, 2011). In the business lexicon, the term "breaking down silos" has become synonymous with creating greater avenues for innovation and collaboration. Vijay Govindarajan highlights CEO of GE, Jack Welch, for being one of the first to leaders to address this challenge in a major way. Working across organizational boundaries was a new way of thinking 25 years ago. Welch advocated for and built what became known as the GE Work-out process – a series of unstructured and facilitated forums, bringing people together across levels, functions, and geographies to solve problems and make decisions in real time. Although communications today have vastly improved and technology has brought massive amounts of information to our fingertips, many organizations still have hierarchical, silo-oriented processes and cultures. As a response, many have created complex, matrixed organizations focused on solutions over products, yet most are not set up to deliver them with specific changes to organizational culture, incentives, and relationships.

In the private sector, innovation is commonly seen as the catalyst that cuts across silos, yet in reality these efforts require *systemic ongoing change*. Ranjay Gulati (2007) of University of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management has found that successful companies such as GE, Best Buy and Jones Lang LaSalle Real Estate (JLL), have transcended existing silos by engaging in a set of activities that put customers at the forefront of an organization. These organizations emphasize a new set of activities by coordinating them in a different way. Companies initially attempt to create structures that transcend rather than destroy existing silos. Boundary-spanning efforts can be highly informal and rely on encouraging the casual exchange of information among employees, or it can take place across senior executives who have a greater knowledge of organizational goals and the work of their subordinates. One way that organizations have tried to create more formal coordination without creating high levels of disruption is to layer boundary-spanning roles over the current structure and charge them with making connections. One example of this was JLL's creation of an umbrella group, Corporate Solutions, comprised of three service units serving as a point of contact for large corporate customers. The group was staffed with officers who had authority and wide-range of experience to help customers with strategic planning. Shortly after the group's creation, JLL began a tremendous run that saw their solutions revenue grow by 50 percent between 2002 and 2005. Cisco created several customer-focused processes, including cross-functional teams organized by customer type that oversaw an end-to-end process that cut across organizational boundaries. While many bridging mechanisms and processes can be effective, they are also difficult to implement and sustain. JLL found that some business units were reluctant to

cede decision-making authority to the Corporate Solutions group. Conflicts also arose over pricing and compensation for members of the new umbrella group. In the end, JLL decided the layered approach was still inhibiting the firm's ultimate growth and so began the formal process of reorganizing internal groups and process around a customer-oriented axis.

Equally important to coordination is building the willingness of members within existing silos to coordinate across functions. Customer-centric companies *reinforce their values through cultural elements, power structures, metrics, and incentives that reward solutions-oriented behavior* (Gulati, 2007). However, coordination must be balanced with the cultural elements of creating systemic change that include the way a company *communicates their values and vision through symbols, stories, and images*. Change is dependent on culture. To bring about change, a leader must *appreciate and honor the existing culture, identify influential stakeholders, and then leverage and empower them to be drivers of change* (Biech, 2007; Katzenbach, et al., 2012; Kotter, 2014). The goal is to begin building a culture where people will adopt a collaborative orientation themselves without the need for incentives or coercion (Kanter, 2014). New metrics and milestones for success are also an essential part of promoting cross-silo cooperation across boundaries instead of within boundaries.

Creating new mechanisms for coordination and fostering the cultural elements of change require employees to develop new skill sets and ways of thinking about the work. One major resistance to change is the act of change itself. Old habits die hard. Ranjay Gulati (2007) believes that rather than highly specialized expertise, a solutions- focus requires employees to develop two types of skills: *multidomain skills* (the ability to work with multiple products and

services) and *boundary-spanning skills* (the ability to forge connections across internal boundaries). Rosabeth Moss Kanter of the Harvard Business School believes training is necessary to make change operational, and education is necessary to communicate the “why” and “what” of change. Sometimes change does not happen because of resistance, but because people simply do not know what to do to make a difference, or how they should act differently (Kanter, 2011). JLL began to rotate individuals through three remaining silos to acquire greater knowledge of the products and to expand their personal networks in the firm. Similarly, Best Buy created a Customer Centric University that was then embedded into new employee orientation in order to share customer segment strategy and rationale. Educational events can help develop the skill sets and behavior change necessary to drive change.

Leadership as an Influence for Change

Leadership can be the catalyst that guides the ongoing systemic change necessary to break down silos and create greater collaboration by first helping everyone understand why change must happen and why they should work together towards a common goal. Due to the nature of my strategic project, I had to first generate and sell ideas before receiving the authority to build a guiding team. In the field there are two prominent models of leading change: John Kotter’s Framework for Change and Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s Skills of Change Masters. For this strategic project, Kanter’s framework for leading change was a more appropriate method for building influence to advance the project than Kotter’s framework for change, which requires a guiding coalition from early on.

Kanter calls those who know how to conceive and lead productive initiatives or ventures that bring new ideas into use “change masters”. She identifies 7 essential fundamental skills necessary to lead successful change efforts of any sort (Kanter, 2005).

PHASES	SKILLS OF CHANGE MASTERS
Generating Ideas	Tuning Into the Environment
	Kaleidoscope Thinking
Selling Ideas	Inspiring Vision
	Building Coalitions
Developing & Implementing Ideas	Nurturing the Work Team
	Persisting through the Difficult Middle
	Making Heroes

Figure 2. Kanter’s Enduring Skills for Change Masters

Kanter (2005) describes 7 skills that fall within three main phases of change. The first two involve generating ideas, the next two involve selling ideas, and the final three involve developing and implementing ideas. The phases of change do not always take place in an orderly sequence; sometimes there is shared responsibility, sometimes people take on an idea that is already formulated, and sometimes they hand off a body of work to another to finish. Projects move through the work at different paces. Kanter explains that even relatively simple and speedy change driven by leaders does not necessarily build the support they intended to receive. When driving change, positional power is not enough, others must become believers too. In Kanter’s *Fundamental Skills of Change Report* (2005), Pamela Thomas-Graham, the CEO of CNBY, describes change as campaign, not just a decision.

Most critically within the first phase of change is to have a good understanding of the particular nature of the organization in order to generate new, stimulating breakthrough ideas. Marshaling data may be critically important as a change element within a particular organization that is moved by rational persuasion (Goodman, 2015). This is the case for BMGF, due to their strategic approach to giving. Therefore, it is important to know the audience, listen to supporters and resisters, and minimize the loss and uncertainty of those being impacted. To do this work, a leader will have to surface the issues with the current state (the culture and the processes) and build a vision for the future (Kotter, 2007; Biech, 2007). Leaders sense opportunities for change by seeking signs of discontinuity, disruption, threat, or opportunity. They are mindful, flexible, and able to tune into a host of new possibilities. Kaleidoscope thinking, as described by Kanter (2005), is the ability to reframe the situation into a new pattern. This is the early work of entry when joining a new organization. Informational interviews, research, and convenings provide opportunities to gain input from key stakeholders and to transform the input into new and inspiring ideas.

The skills related to being receptive to environments and convincing others to participate in change are especially critical for an effort focused on creating greater alignment and collaboration within an organization and across systems. Just as it is important to develop a vision, it is equally important to shape the vision into a theme and make a compelling case for the value and direction of change. Relating a vision involves more than just communication – it requires big picture envisioning, imagination, and translation. Unless people have a compelling vision, they can slow changes even if the changes are being ordered

from leadership. This calls for enlisting the right supporters and backers to get buy-in; these people will be supporters and defenders of the initiative. Coalition building is an important aspect for a change leader who must seek to create new relationships, include others in the process, and foster a sense of trust.

The final stage of leading change concerns the development and implementation of ideas. Developing a structure for a cross-functional team working across silos will be an incredibly difficult endeavor within the foundation. Therefore, leaders should encourage a more voluntary commitment that allows team members to embrace the goals of change as their own. Leadership then becomes about supporting the team, providing political cover, gathering resources, and sustaining momentum. Small wins are important, however as momentum slows, leaders must remain champions of the vision. One of the most critical leadership skills is to celebrate, reward, and recognize the accomplishments of others. In traditional organizations, recognition is probably the most underutilized motivational tool (Kanter, 2005). Skillful leaders can move through the three phases of change by generating ideas, selling ideas, and implementing ideas, however, they cannot lead the change process alone; they must work to convince others to join them in mastering change. Leading a change process to create greater connections across education silos within the foundation will require systemic ongoing change.

Strategy Development for K-12/PS Transitions Investments

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation can hope to spur such an external approach by focusing on high-leverage, strategic investments aimed at the alignment of their K-12 and postsecondary strategies that create synergies and

support shared collaboration. Currently, K-12 and postsecondary institutions usually function in a different system, with different leaders, priorities, incentives, accountability mechanisms, financial systems, data systems, norms, academic expectations, ways to measure progress and success, and pedagogies or instructional strategies (Venezia, 2013). Although the Common Core has the potential to bridge the gap between sectors, the separation continues to severely limit opportunities and create greater inequalities between large populations of students. Creating systemic change, focused on public policy alignment and greater collaboration between both sectors, will require a change in the operating culture. A strategic philanthropic strategy focused on K-12/PS transitions brings together theories of leverage, action, and scale at the statewide and regional level that have the potential to create a greater number of academically prepared students, smooth the transition of students across systems, and ultimately lead to a greater amount of degree acquisition.

The Gates Foundation is also structured in a silo-oriented manner that has different divisions with separate leaders, priorities, incentives, accountability systems, and measures of success. These divisions severely limit their ability to create new strategies that bridge the gap between both sectors and create synergies across the foundation. Building influence and leading change within the organization is an important aspect of organizing the internal structures that will ultimately lead to grantmaking activity designed to smooth the transition from K-12 to postsecondary, leading to greater amounts of college attainment.

Theory of Action

This discussion leads to a theory of action for reform in the education sector at large and a theory of action related to leading change to support those reforms.

External:

If the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation...

- invests in interventions and solutions that improve academic readiness, increase access to college preparatory instruction, better equip students and families to make informed postsecondary entry decisions and improve student's ability to access financial aid;
 - invests in policy-oriented solutions that create greater alignment between high school and postsecondary expectations, assessments, college entrance and college placement;
 - creates regional and statewide networks that develop and sustain collaborative partnerships aimed at redesigning cross-sector partnerships;
- then students will have the academic skills, navigational knowledge, institutional opportunities and aligned policy structures that will lead to more effective transitions across the high school to postsecondary pipeline, ultimately leading to a greater amount of degree acquisition.

Internal:

If I...

- interview key stakeholders to identify best practices, current partnerships in the field and gather recommendations for effective grantmaking activities;
 - research evidence-based approaches and best practices in the field;
 - collect historical institutional information regarding previous efforts, transition frameworks and grantmaking activities;
 - identify organizational structures that create greater methods for coordination, collaboration and innovation across College Ready (CR) and PS within the foundation;
 - develop a problem statement, alignment framework and logic model for new investments;
- then I will gain buy-in and credibility from program officers and foundation leaders, resulting in authorization of future K-12/PS transitions work, operational capacity and financial resources for new investments.

Strategic Project Description

Understanding the Environment: Sensing Challenges and Opportunities

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has sought to ensure all students have access to a robust, highly personalized learning experience that leads to a postsecondary degree or credential with labor market value through two separate strategies focused on their respective systems. The foundation has made considerable investments, particularly in the K-12 strategy, focused on supporting effective teaching, high-quality standards that specify what students need in order to be prepared for college-level work, and technology systems and interventions that promise to bring personalized learning in schools to scale. The postsecondary strategy has also made steady financial and organizational growth, particularly around developmental education, adoption of state-level higher education policies, and growing forms of online instruction in both 2- and 4-year institutions that promise personalized learning at scale. Yet, despite the development of both bodies of work, there have only been sporadic attempts at creating greater connections between K-12 and postsecondary partners, both within the field and within the organization. Although there is consensus throughout the organization that creating greater connections between both systems is an important aspect of improving the successful transition of students from high school to college, there has been no sustained effort to identify and build a portfolio of investments specifically aimed at K-12/postsecondary alignment and student transitions.

I entered the foundation in June of 2015 as a doctoral resident fellow of the U.S. Policy, Advocacy, and Communications (USPAC)⁴ division, reporting to John Denning, Senior Program Officer. The first phase of my strategic project was focused on understanding the internal functions of the foundation and immersing myself in the strategies of both the College Ready (K-12), Postsecondary, and USPAC teams. (For organizational chart, see Appendix A.) This also included gaining a better understanding of the emergent set of K-12/PS transitions work housed in USPAC, and the history of how those investments came to be. Understanding the internal operations of the foundation was critical because of the unique nature of philanthropy and the method of strategic philanthropy used by BMGF.

During the second phase, my responsibility was to lead an analysis that would culminate in the development of a framework, theory of action, and set of investment recommendations intended for the USP leadership to establish strategic priorities in the K-12/PS transition space. My analysis built upon a previous review completed by USPAC in 2013 and was meant to leverage current windows of opportunity in policy and practice. This analysis included: 1) Current and historical investments, frameworks, and practices across USP, 2) Summarization of interviews among key USP staff and key grantees, and 3) Landscape review of key programmatic and policy developments, and research. Outside of the technical aspects of the strategic project was the informal work of

⁴ The USPAC division is a separate division within the foundation that makes policy, advocacy and communications grants intended to support the programmatic work of both the College Ready and postsecondary teams.

building support and identifying how best to communicate my findings to the organization.

The third phase included operationalizing as much of the recommendations as possible during the remainder of my residency – after receiving approval and potential funding – for an expanded set of investments. Although my findings would recommend a course of action for the foundation, the findings would also present a number of options for the foundation to consider. Due to the ambiguity of the decision making process, the foundation leadership could decide to pursue a number of different options ranging from only pursuing policy-related investments at this time to creating a cross-functional team that would begin making program-related grants in a select number of states. The success of the strategic project, according to the USPAC program officers supporting this project, would be measured by my ability to accomplish the first two phases and to receive authority to establish a K-12/PS transitions portfolio approved by the foundation leadership.

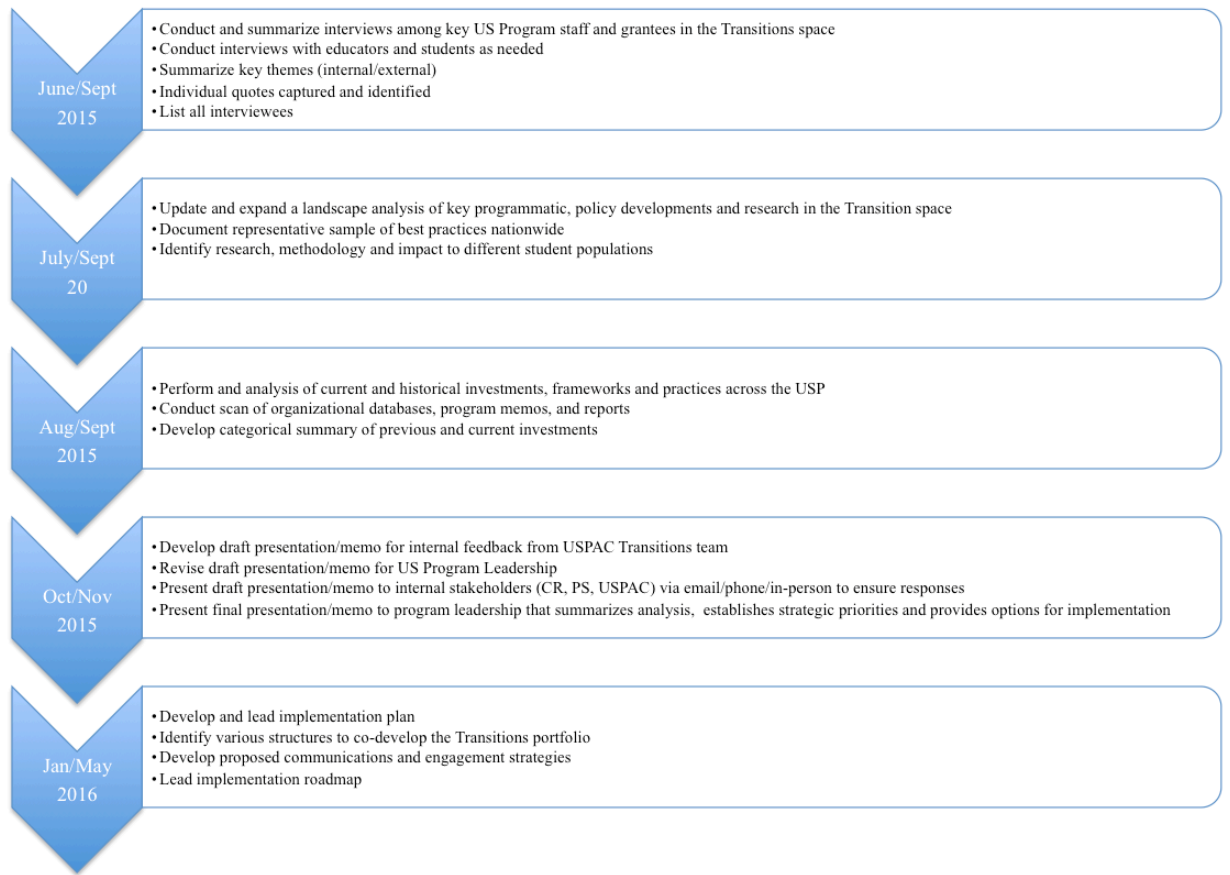


Figure 3. K-12/PS Transitions Strategic Work Plan Summary

Upon meeting with some of my USPAC colleagues, I received additional insight to a similar analysis of student K-12/PS transitions and systems alignment that had taken place in 2013. A small team comprised primarily of USPAC program officers⁵ – with the support of a few programmatic program officers – had presented a set of recommendations to USP leadership. These recommendations centered on expanding early academic remediation in high school, improving consumer information for students, supporting linked data systems, and improving college affordability through a new set of investments.

⁵ USPAC Program officers either support College Ready or postsecondary program teams.

However, due to budgeting concerns, the K-12/PS transitions work remained within the USPAC division and focused on further exploring potential areas of opportunity with limited funds for a small set of exploration grants. This work led to three distinct grants focused on design, practice, and policy. The first of these grants focused on student voice and included a design process in which high school and postsecondary students identified specific challenges and potential solutions in the K-12 to postsecondary transition space. Another one of the grants brought together leading researchers and policy experts to redesign 12th grade around a set of collaboration principles. The final investments funded landscape reviews of K-12/PS transitions policies related to 12th-grade remediation, dual enrollment, college readiness assessments, and postsecondary placement policies that would be available to state policymakers.

As I met with the USPAC K-12/PS transitions team, I soon realized they all believed in the importance of the transitions/alignment work, yet had considerable scars from their last effort. Clearly, members of the team felt that by not focusing on student transitions, many students would succumb to the barriers associated with academic readiness, consumer information, social/emotional preparation, and affordability. Yet, even more so, members of the team were concerned about how to mount a successful attempt at developing a K-12/PS transitions portfolio after the last attempt had faltered. Fortunately, the new director of USPAC, Gavin Payne, had also stated his support for the K-12/PS transitions work, as he was the one who advocated and budgeted for a resident fellow to bring a renewed focus to the work.

After hearing from the K-12/PS transitions team, I knew it would be incumbent upon me to differentiate my analysis and set of recommendations

from the previous set of recommendations. I had early ideas to include an additional set of recommendations beyond the programmatic and policy investments aimed at identifying the internal change management structures needed to bring together the two separate divisions within the foundation.

Interviews and Initial Findings

A critical aspect of the project included hearing from program officers and leaders throughout the foundation in order to understand the challenges and opportunities in this space. (For complete list of interviews, see Appendix B.) This was a crucial component of the first phase of Kanter's change process (Tuning into the environment and kaleidoscope thinking). I also used the opportunity to gather recommendations from the interviewees themselves as to how the foundation could be more effective externally and internally in this arena. The process helped me gather important information, create relationships, gain buy-in, and identify those who could be advocates in the future. Fortunately, the K-12/PS transitions team had already worked to identify potential interviewees across the foundation, based on their current area of work, their previous work or their passion for the work. The early feedback from the interviews also provided me with rich material for identifying programmatic investment opportunities, external partners to contact, internal programs officers to connect with, and the history of previous efforts. All of this information gave me a tremendous baseline to begin my analysis.

As the internal interview process began, I was simultaneously working to build a matrix that identified promising interventions, the efficacy of those

interventions, external examples of each intervention in the field, and current or previous investments that the foundation had funded in those domains. The work of interviewing external grantees and K-12/PS transitions organizations to identify challenges and opportunities in the K-12/PS transitions space would take place after the initial set of internal interviews.

Defining the Scope

Focusing on K-12/postsecondary transitions can prove to be troubling, particularly because it is not clearly defined and falls in a space that is both shared and outside of the boundaries of the traditional K-12 and postsecondary silos. Therefore, a large aspect of the work was defining the scope of the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. This became abundantly obvious as the internal interviews unfolded. Several senior program officers mentioned that the K-12/PS transitions portfolio needed a vision, theory of action, and clearly defined set of recommendations that everyone could see their work touching. Program officers and deputies also mentioned a number of current investments including early warning/advising systems and personalized adaptive technology that were being developed by both the CR and PS teams separately, but had potential applicability in both sectors. Others felt that there was not a clear understanding of the challenges students faced in this arena and how those challenges resulted in negative outcomes. Most notably, many interviewees identified the lack of engagement from leadership and the nonexistence of internal processes to create grants that fell between divisions. As a result, I worked to combine my analysis

of the content with a fully formed strategy, logic model, set of external investment recommendations, and internal operational recommendations.

Defining the Deliverables (Content vs. Timing)

While I worked to create a K-12/PS transitions portfolio, my supervisor and I were unaware of what the final deliverable would entail and how and to whom it would be presented. One key aspect of the work within the foundation is the consideration of budget and grantmaking cycles. I soon learned that the budget decision-making process took place between September and November. Consequently, projects may have a higher likelihood of success if presented within the budget planning process, although this would only give me 4 months to complete the review. I was also made aware that there were other funding mechanisms that existed within the foundation, in case we were unable to present during the budget planning process. Keeping this in mind, I shot for a mid-October due date to have a final report and presentation ready with my findings. Although I knew there was a very low likelihood of completing my external interviews in time, I decided that the opportunity to present within the correct timeframe was more important to the success of the project. My decision was informed by John Kingdon's (1984) classic analysis of the importance of capitalizing on policy windows that open when a problem had been identified and political leaders turn to develop solutions. I knew that I had to begin working on the policy (i.e., a plan informed by research and evidence) just in case the window of opportunity aligned. We would work to get an early copy to the USPAC leadership for feedback and wait for their determination as to how

and when to present. Another thing we were aware of was the notion that these recommendations included the full work of USP and would most likely need to go beyond the USPAC leadership and somehow get in front of the full U.S. Programs leadership team.

An Unexpected Window

While the analysis and second round of interviews were underway, the foundation was also preparing for a national public event called the Education Learning Forum that ultimately changed the trajectory of our original timeline. On October 7, 2015, Bill and Melinda Gates, along with the USP leadership and grantees, would inform the public about what the foundation had learned over the past 15 years and how they were planning to move forward. By happenstance, my second round of interviews included a member of the President's office no more than a week after the Learning Forum. As I began to describe my project in order to gather her feedback, she described how timely the K-12/PS transitions work was to creating bridges of opportunities across systems. Apparently, this had been a key theme of the Education Learning Forum and stated several times by USP President, Allan Golston. As a result, the opportunity came to present my findings to the entire USP leadership team – the president, directors and deputy directors – in early November. We then set out to have a draft copy ready for review by the USPAC leadership team 2 weeks before the presentation to the USP leadership team. This would only provide me with a total of 3 weeks to create a full portfolio review and executive summary, after only 3 and half months of the residency.

The K-12/PS Transitions Portfolio Review and Alignment Strategy

Within 3 weeks I created the full portfolio review, with input from program officers and USPAC leadership, containing a problem definition, context, theory or action, theory of scale, and potential options for internal organization for the USP Extended Leadership Team. The following strategy is a summary of the final deliverable of the Ed.L.D. strategic project given to the USPAC leadership team and is the core of the presentation made to the ELT. This strategy was presented as a PowerPoint to the Extended Leadership Team, however, the ELT version of the presentation did not include internal organizational recommendations, due to a request from the President's office.

Problem Definition

Currently, the United States has vast disparities in the educational trajectory of students that disproportionately impact ethnic minority and less affluent children. The reasons for these disparities go well beyond the scope of education, however a high-quality education can still meet the promise of advancing greater social and economic mobility for those with the greatest need. Considering that a college degree now constitutes the education goal-line for students, the transition from high school to college is of particular importance. Through an IDEO grant, we heard from students themselves about their lack of access to rigorous curriculum, their fear of rejection, their lack of information, and the absence of a clear career path. As a result of academic, navigational, and enabling conditions, there continues to be large disparities in college enrollment, the number of students who “undermatch”, the number of students in

remediation, and the ability of students to acquire financial aid, and eventually complete college.

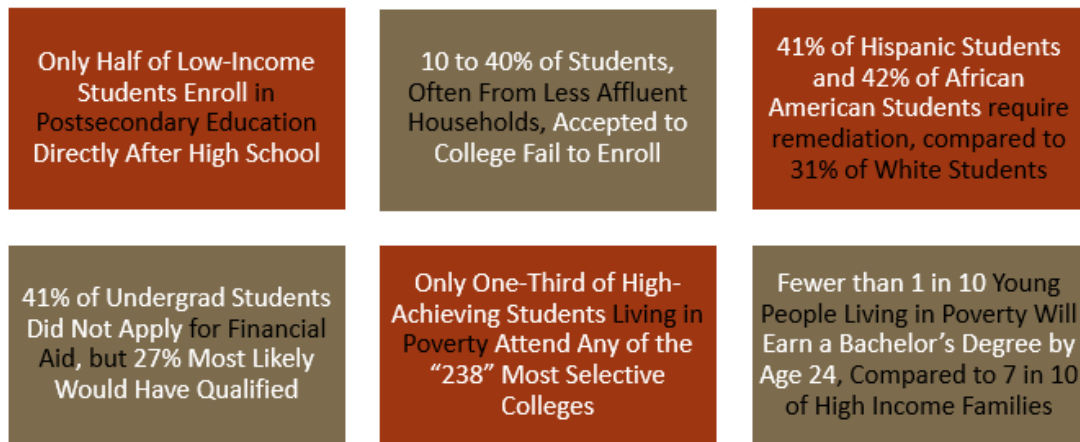


Figure 4. K-12/PS transitions stats presented to USP leadership (NCES, 2012; Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Bailey & Dynarski, 2011)

The failure to strengthen K-12/postsecondary transitions threatens to undermine the foundation's efforts to translate college readiness to postsecondary success. At the state level these barriers impact the educational outcomes of students across the pipeline. Key focus states for the foundation have strengths and areas of concern that can be identified by looking at the system as a whole. For example, when looking at the trajectory of 8th graders in Massachusetts, 30 out of 100 graduate from college within 6 years upon high school graduation. This is the best in the nation, although Massachusetts has a high proportion of these students who begin college, yet do not finish. On the contrary, Colorado has a strong proportion of students from a cohort of 100 who finish high school and complete their postsecondary degree upon entrance; however, they lose a high proportion of students in the transition from high

school to college compared to the rest of the nation. Therefore, it is critical to focus on the pipeline as a whole, including the transition from high school to college, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses across the K-12 and postsecondary divide.

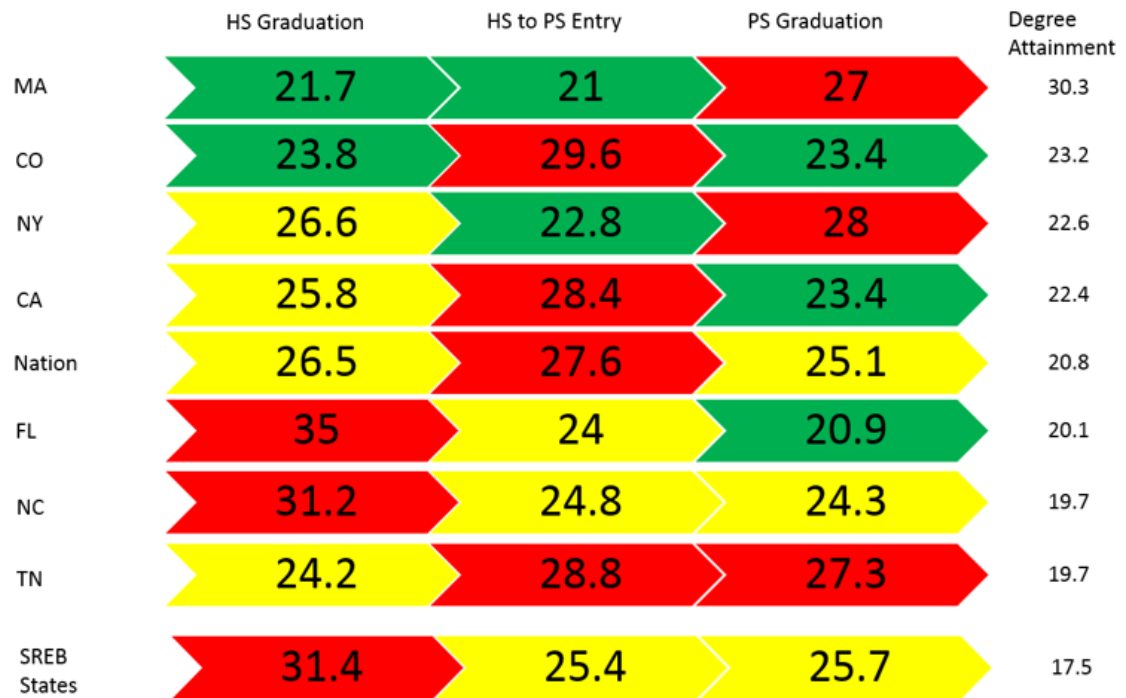


Figure 5. Out of 100 Students, Number Lost at Each Stage of the Pipeline in Key Focus States (NCHEMS, 2010)

The Window of Opportunity for Collaboration in the Field and at the Foundation

A new set of opportunities and challenges are on the horizon that call for strengthening the K-12 to postsecondary pipeline. The nation's transition to the Common Core State Standards and the passage of ESSA has provoked systems to seek new avenues of assessment and accountability intended to improve college readiness. In the same vein, higher education is facing rising pressure from

policymakers and the public surrounding performance, such as improving completion rates and labor market outcomes for their graduates, while also seeking avenues to reduce costs and provide affordable options for students.

In response, several efforts across the country have brought together school districts and postsecondary institutions to improve college preparation, student transitions, and college completion. This collaboration has resulted in concerted efforts to reduce or eliminate remediation in the 12th grade, to align high school graduation requirements with college entrance requirements, and to develop programs that commit postsecondary aid to low-income students in exchange for adequate preparation (e.g., Long Beach College Promise, Tennessee Promise). Additionally, student-centered, high school to postsecondary pathways tied to future workforce needs are being developed throughout the country. At the same time, both K-12 and higher education are individually developing new technologies intended to deliver personalized instruction or create early warning systems that provide timely interventions.

Internally, BMGF has publicly stated its desire to strengthen the bridges to opportunity across the education spectrum. The work of postsecondary developmental education has moved into high school. To address this, a postsecondary program officer through Grantmakers for Education is leading a collaboration of funders interested in high school to postsecondary transitions. There is ample opportunity for the Gates Foundation to be a leader and collaborator in the K-12/PS transition zone, building on previous investments, including early college high schools and Common Core implementation efforts. Although there are countless examples of collaboration taking place across the country, many are local and regional in nature and few have expanded to the

statewide level. The foundation can help bring clarity to the number of interventions and successful models that exist in the K-12/PS transitions arena, while also expanding the reach of high-quality collaboration efforts.

Risks and Past Foundation Efforts

Past alignment efforts (P-16 or P-20) across the country have shown mixed results, often serving to create a system-wide agenda and improving coordination, yet failing change public policies or translate to practice. Weak incentives and historical baggage have often thwarted the efforts of collaboration at a greater scale. Previous efforts within the foundation reflect the difficulties of creating sustained alignment and coordination across divisions. Indeed, creating synergies across internal divisions can bolster the success of each division individually, but the work must be entered into jointly to optimize it against each strategy's goals. The work requires new collaborative innovations outside of traditional spaces. Even when shared ventures are created, the requisite infrastructure must allow for learning, continuous improvement and building momentum.

Given this history, the window of opportunity is open for the foundation to capitalize on the maturity of both CR and PS strategies and the internal knowledge they have acquired from previous investments and coordination efforts. Alignment efforts must bridge the foundation strategies that are at a level of maturity that may call for collaboration and mutual leverage in local settings. BMGF has also made substantial investments in blended/postsecondary models such as early college high schools that now have evidence of positive impact and can be harvested for larger impact. Previous investments (Core to College,

Partnership for College and Career Readiness), present examples of cross-sector collaboration with a focus on implementation that can be examined for best practices. Additionally, a number of current investments across CR and PS have potential applicability in both sectors. Subsequently, program officers are beginning to meet informally about early warning systems, texting technology, and adaptive courseware in transition courses.

With a greater understanding of the challenges and the window of opportunity moving forward, in combination with an analytic review of the literature and the field, the K-12/PS transitions framework relays a distinct vision, theory of action, and set of recommendations for programmatic and internal organization.

VISION OF THE K-12/PS TRANSITION SPACE

Students will transition successfully through the K-16 education pipeline, earning a postsecondary degree or credential in a student-led, timely, and affordable manner.

GOALS – In order to meet the vision of the transition space, it is critical for students to stay on-track academically and to make informed decision at key transition points. Eliminating structural barriers includes integrated data systems and a supportive policy infrastructure. The theory of action brings these goals together under a set of 5 recommended strategies within the transition elements. (For theory of action/logic model, see Appendix D.)

- 1) Bolster academic readiness for students,
- 2) Equip and support students to navigate the terrain to and through college and
- 3) Eliminate structural barriers that limit opportunity.

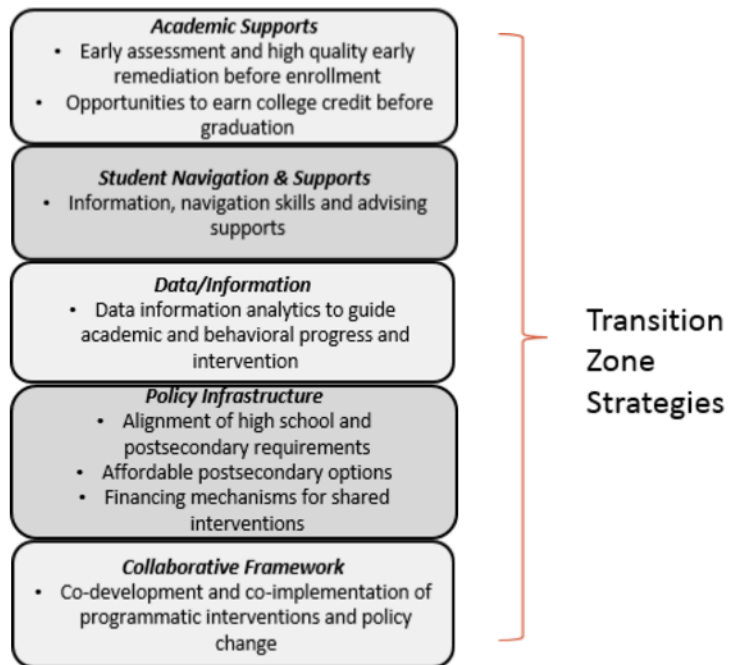
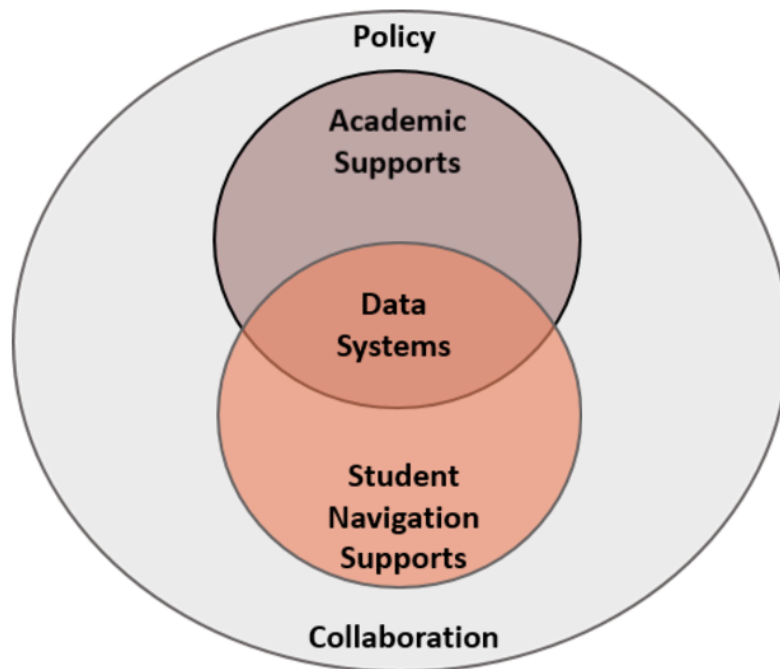


Figure 6. Transition Zone Framework and Key Strategies. The transition zone framework and strategies were presented to USP leadership as the core of the recommendations.

Student-Focused Transition Elements

The K-12/PS transitions framework defines 2 distinct student-focused categories with an initial 11th through 13th grade focus 1) Academic Supports, which mainly referred to 12th grade early remediation, and 2) Student Navigation, which referred to consumer information and student decision making. Within each of these domains, I identified promising interventions that fell within the scope of the both K-12 and PS strategies. These interventions were then cross-walked with previous and current investments across all USP divisions.

- 1. [Academic Supports]: Explore Opportunities within Transition Courses for Shared Interventions and Innovation.** The 12th grade is an area that is ripe for collaboration and shared innovation across teams. The foundation has made significant investments that can aid the design and deployment of *transition courses*. Early evidence on the impact of *adaptive courseware* shows positive effects, and prior learnings from past investments such as early college high schools have potential value to glean the most effective aspects of the model, including *dual enrollment at scale*, *shared data systems*, *co-curricular design*, and *navigation supports* that can enhance student outcomes.

Rationale

One of the most significant transition points, especially for underrepresented students, is between the 11th grade and completion of the first-year in a credit-bearing postsecondary institution. Promoting stronger transition supports can include a multifaceted set of interventions resulting in a number of locally developed models, including solutions that include advocating for diagnostic

assessments in 11th grade that align with Common Core, education courseware compatible with Common Core, high-quality transition courses, and curricula aligned with postsecondary placement standards, and opportunities for dual enrollment. Early research on the effects of transition courses is promising. A quasi-experimental study of California's EAP indicated that it reduced the need for remediation by 6.1 percent in English and 4.1 percent in math (Howell, Kurlaender & Grodsky, 2010). Further, high schools using early remediation in 12th grade have resulted in a 6 percent increase in the college graduation rate and a 17 percent increase in college enrollment (Boatman, 2012). Yet, early studies of transitions courses reveal design and implementation concerns, such as clarity of purpose (preparation for placement exam vs. preparation for credit-bearing work), intersections with curricular requirements, and complications arising from a lack of clear definition of college readiness. The CR division has invested in SREB to scale transition courses in southern states, and the PS division is supporting CCRC's efforts to evaluate existing diagnostic instruments to evaluate transition curricula as part of Tennessee SAILS. Moreover, a robust body of research is still needed to determine the efficacy of transition courses on the whole.

2. **[Student Navigation and Advising Supports]: Explore Opportunities to Expand Student Navigation Interventions Beginning in the 11th Grade.** The current set of CR investments related to *low-cost texting interventions that simplify college-match and financial aid information* are set to expire. This set of investments currently does not fall squarely in the arena of the CR strategy. However, since students need to begin making critical decisions in high

school, this set of interventions may be best suited for the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. Areas of future opportunity include *tools and products that can nudge student behavior, and advising supports that create increased clarity and improved decision making for students and families* with advanced analytics that deliver personalized content.

Rationale

Navigating the trajectory across the education pipeline is a matter of making critical decisions at key transition points. The amount of information that students and families must contend with is staggering and includes information about college and careers, financial aid, ratings and rankings, application, and course selection. More affluent families have the resources to navigate this space; however, others must rely on high school guidance counselors or peer networks. The foundation has made a number of investments intended to improve clarity and consumer information for students and parents. College Ready has made investments in a number of low-cost texting interventions and research (University of Virginia) that simplify college match and financial aid information with assistance to complete college or financial aid applications and cost from \$2 to \$12 per student. Early randomized control trials of text messaging interventions for disadvantaged students increased enrollment in the range of 3 to 7 percentage points, which has effect sizes similar to that of summer counselors and peer mentors (Castleman & Page, 2015). This is important considering the financial aid literature has generally found that \$1000 in

additional grant aid increases enrollment by 3 to 6 percentage points.⁶

Furthermore, PS is currently investigating the behavioral components of financial capability with an investment in Ideas 42, which gives students enough information before college and in college to manage their finances. Subsequently, this impacts college choice and student enrollment yield, which can significantly negate student opportunity.

Enabling Conditions

Beyond the student-focused interventions that were aimed at programmatic investments, I identified 3 more categories aimed at broader enabling factors that included public policy and systems change. Investments that impact the enabling conditions often fall within the realm of the U.S. Policy, Advocacy, and Communications division.

3. [K-12/PS Student Data Systems]: Explore Opportunities for Integrated Data/Warning Systems and Knowledge Sharing Across Systems. The foundation has made investments in data systems for *education planning, progress tracking, advising, and early alerts* that have potential in both K-12 and postsecondary. Future opportunities include collaborations and *supporting networks that share knowledge, implementation strategies, cost efficiencies, and research* that can help systems bridge the K-12 and postsecondary information sharing gap.

⁶ This is not a perfect comparison because they involve different populations and student trajectories (Deming & Dynarski, 2009).

Rationale

Schools, colleges and state departments often have a great number of student data, yet have little capacity to make sense of the data in order to gauge student progress and provide timely interventions and support. The foundation has made investments in data systems at both the K-12 (CRIS, High School Feedback Reports) and postsecondary (IPAS, National Student Clearinghouse) levels that have shown early evidence of success. However, much of this evidence is largely restricted to self-reported results; therefore, a more robust body of research is needed. College Ready has made previous investments with the Data Quality Campaign, which now reports 44 states have K-12/postsecondary data system linkages, while 9 of those demonstrate great implementation. Most recently, CR is supporting a future effort led by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University to bring together K-12 and postsecondary leaders to develop a network focused on using indicators and response systems to improve secondary and postsecondary outcomes. The Postsecondary division is also undertaking an effort to support a student unit record database to inform institutional and system-wide performance improvement that may have the potential to inform K-12 leaders.

- 4. [K-12/PS Supportive Policy Infrastructure]: Support Future Opportunities to Convene State Leaders and the Deliver Required Technical Assistance for Policy Alignment and Financial Support for the K-12/PS Transitions Work.** Both ECS and New America Foundation intend to bring together policymakers and leading educators to provide accompanying resources and technical assistance to assist states in the development of strategies that

respond to their own unique needs while learning from the response of other states.

Rationale

A supportive policy infrastructure is necessary for enabling state efforts to create a more conducive environment for scaling and expanding transition courses and curricula, sharing data across institutional and sector lines, and financing K-12 to postsecondary transitions. Funding mechanisms currently provide little to no incentive to share students across sector lines or to finance transition supports at scale. Furthermore, misalignment between secondary and postsecondary definitions of college readiness, curriculum, college and career standards, high school assessments, and higher education placement policies create structural barriers that are difficult for low-income and first-generation students to overcome. (For states with high school and postsecondary assessment alignment, see Appendix E.) Current USPAC investments with ECS (Blueprint for College Readiness) and the New America Foundation (Atlas) are documenting and mapping college readiness and alignment policies across the country. Moreover, both seek to bring together state leaders and provide a greater network of support.

5. **[Opportunities for Greater K-12/Postsecondary Collaboration]: Further Test and Refine the Co-Cubed Framework Across a Carefully Selected Number of States.** The Co-Cubed Framework (co-design, co-delivery, co-validation) presents an opportunity to test a set of shared collaboration principles between high schools and colleges with a focus on early intervention in

developmental education in the 12th grade. Although the K-12/PS transitions portfolio could potentially offer a number of products and models, a framework for shared collaboration *creates avenues for innovation, scale and sustainability at local levels that can address implementation and policy barriers*. The Co-Cubed principles have the potential to further expand the reach of the K-12/PS transitions portfolio into the broader ends of K-12 and Postsecondary.

Rationale

A current USPAC investment with Jobs for the Future has brought together leading researchers and leaders to frame the principles of design for collaborative partnership. Subsequently, JFF will put these ideas into action by prototyping and documenting for replication key pathways from senior year through the first year of postsecondary. Jobs for the Future will support the prototyping of pathways to be designed by innovation teams from local regions within states already working with JFF and leverage existing foundation networks including Student Success Centers. Furthermore, previous investments (Core to College, College and Career Readiness Partnership) can be examined and harvested for best practices.

Transition Zone Student Response

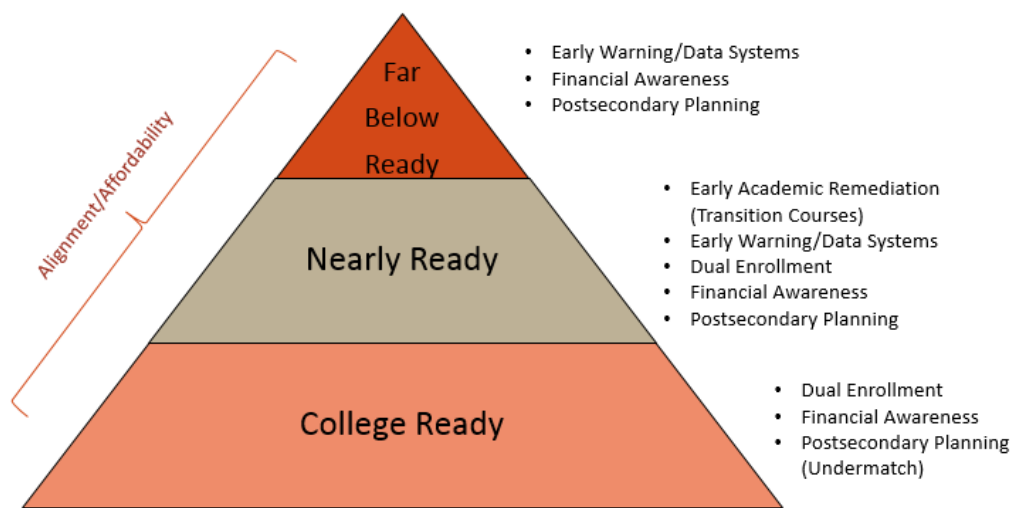


Figure 7. Transition Zone tiered student response presented to USP leadership as part of core recommendations

Internal Governance/Procedural Structures/Operational Capacity

The K-12/PS transitions work is an effort within BMGF to create key connections within and across strategies – College Ready (K-12), Postsecondary, and Advocacy – and expands upon the work in the transition space. The work of program officers and leaders as key actors in the development of a collaborative partnership is a reflection of creating greater collaboration between systems in the field. Currently, program officers face a number of challenges related to visibility, transparency, communication, and inclusiveness when working across divisions. The task then is to develop the internal infrastructure to leverage past and current investments across divisions and coordinate future investments, as appropriate.

- 1. Establish Student K-12/Postsecondary Transitions as a Key Strategic Priority**
 - Provide visible support and communication from leadership.
 - Develop a common definition across teams and shared vision for K-12/PS transitions work.
- 2. Develop the Requisite Support and Infrastructure for the K-12/PS Transitions Portfolio**
 - Ensure high visibility, transparency, communication, and inclusiveness.
 - Develop procedures, milestones, measures, and feedback loops. (For Sample of Shared Indicators, see Appendix F.)
 - Identify internal organizational structures for the K-12/PS transitions portfolio.
- 3. Co-create K-12/ PS Transitions Portfolio and Research Base, and Build Organizational Sustainability**
 - Further develop the K-12/PS transitions portfolio focused on the set of recommendations outlined above.
 - Develop a research base for new and existing investments.
 - Build the organizational capacity and sustainability of partners in the K-12/PS transition space.
 - Identify other funders in the K-12/PS transitions space and seek opportunities to leverage K-12/PS connections. (For K-12/PS transitions and alignment funders, see Appendix G.)
- 4. Test and Scale Promising Interventions, Models and Collaboration Opportunities in the Transition Space**
 - Connect CR and PS in more systematic ways programmatically through geographic alignment. Strengthen place-based relationship building and approaches through ecosystem supports.

Internal Transitions Structure Options	Definition	Pros	Cons
<i>Ad Hoc</i>	Rely on DDs and POs to make connections across teams. (Continuation of existing system)	-No change in status quo required - No additional time or funding required -No new investment risks	- Missed opportunities to strengthen success of both strategies - Continued concerns regarding visibility & communication across teams - Missed opportunities for knowledge sharing
<i>PS (Access) Set of Investments</i>	Broaden the scope of PS Access investments to include the Transition Zone between 11 th grade and PS Entry.	-No change to current division functions -Increased opportunity for cross-team interaction through PO -Less additional time and funding required - Funding and budgeting simplicity	-Doesn't create an avenue for greater clarity, communication and collaboration across teams - Less opportunities for shared learning -Less opportunities for alignment investments earlier in middle school and elementary -New investment risks -Reliance on single PO - Accountability to PS goals, not shared goals.
<i>Dual Operating System</i>	With support from leadership, a "Guiding Coalition" builds the principles and strategic initiatives of focus, while enlisting a flexible network of exclusive volunteers across the organization to tackle challenges. Solutions are then brought to leadership as new innovations.	-Increases visibility, communication and connections across teams -Creates a system for integrated investments -Creates a mechanism for innovation -Opportunities for cross-division and team collaboration -Creates opportunities for leadership	-Time needed for members to participate -Buy-in needed from leadership -Skepticism of unfamiliar structure -Incentives for participation from flexible network -Identification of Guiding Coalition members -Interruption of status quo, risk aversion -Requires shared set of funding
<i>Place in President's Office</i>	Make this a special initiative in the Office of the President, with a PO who makes	-Demonstrates importance of the work -Greater visibility	-Reliance on single PO -Less opportunities for greater clarity,

	connections across teams, and has funding for shared investments.	across all divisions -Funding and budgeting simplicity -Greater opportunities for aligned investments/ coordinated across all divisions	communication across teams. -Less opportunities for integrated investments across teams -New investment risks -Out of President's office scope
<i>Working Group</i>	Create a special working group who co-develops the Transitions portfolio and makes connections across teams	-Increases clarity, communication, collaboration across teams -Greater opportunity for aligned/ coordinated investments across all divisions	-Limited areas of overlap may not call for standing team -Not the primary focus of POs, limited accountability -Time needed for members to participate -Requires shared budgeting -Membership turnover, loss of momentum -Outside of current division structures (reporting, authority)
<i>Remain in USPAC</i>	Continue a separate portfolio of USPAC Transition investments	-No change to current division functions - Limited additional funding or time required -Increases external policy information sharing and networking across sectors	-Doesn't create an avenue for greater clarity, communication and collaboration across teams - Less opportunities for shared learning -Less opportunities for shared program investments -Not the primary focus of POs, limited accountability -Limited budget

Figure 8. Pros and Cons of K-12/PS Transitions Internal Organizational Options

Future Areas for Exploration

Observably, there are key aspects of college readiness beyond the 5 transition priorities outlined here, specifically, social/behavioral factors, and

effective teaching. In the first set of recommendations, these factors will be addressed indirectly (social/behavioral in connection with data/information, teaching in connection with academic supports), but will not be targeted as focus areas. Social/behavioral factors are not a core area of focus in the College Ready strategy (except insofar as they touch initiatives such as CRIS and Mathways). Effective teaching in the transition space can be more effectively addressed once the ecosystem of models and providers is more established. A set of potential future areas of focus that broaden the transition scope and provide an avenue greater system wide alignment should only take place after the aforementioned 5 core elements have been addressed.

After determining the content of the K-12/PS transitions and alignment strategy, the K-12/PS transitions team began to lay out a course of action intended to build momentum and support leading up to the Extended Leadership Team presentation.

Building Influence through a Campaign

Between mid-October and the mid-November presentation date, my supervisor and I started building out a list of important stakeholders within the organization who needed to be informed of the work, and more importantly, who could help support our efforts before the presentation to leadership. After speaking to the K-12/PS transitions team, we all felt that it was critically important to have other key influencers who could champion the efforts with us. This is an example of Skill #4 in Kanter's framework for Change (Enlisting

Backers and Supporters: Getting Buy-In, Building Coalitions) highlighted in the RKA. The K-12/PS transitions team was incredibly helpful in this respect. After mapping out key leadership figures in both CR and PS, we were able to identify who among our team would talk to whom. This was important, since the foundation is a large, complex organization with matrixed teams and divisions that often operate in isolation of each other. Further, the organization has a hierarchical chain of command, where connections across the organization are more likely to happen at the leadership level. Often, when silos are created, information remains within individual work streams and not shared across separate bodies of work (Kotter, 2012). It became critically important for us to begin identifying those that could help us communicate the importance of this work across divisions.

In academia we often segment theoretical frameworks and concepts as distinct bodies of work. In the practitioner world, we pick and choose the best elements of theory and use them as needed. With feedback from my supervisor, I incorporated elements of Marshall Ganz's (2010) Framework for Leadership, Organizing and Action and Robert Goodman's (2015) Model of Influence to begin building a game plan to engage key program officers and deputy directors across the U.S. Program. We began by identifying our target audiences, giving them context and background knowledge of the project, and then centering a request with a specific approach. Our final aim was to inform and inspire individuals to take action by talking to leadership about the project, to show support by providing feedback to our executive summary, or to agree to participate in future efforts to share ideas.

An Unexpected Twist in Leadership

During our mini-campaign effort we were notified that the long-standing director of the College Ready team, Vicki Phillips, had announced she was stepping down from her position and leaving the foundation. Shortly after the announcement, we were also informed that Allan Golston, President of U.S. Programs, would serve as the interim director until a new director was found. This presented a “wild card” factor that we had not anticipated. On one hand a change in leadership presented an opportunity for support that may have been absent in the past. We were aware that Allan Golston was interested in bridging efforts across divisions and saw connection to our work. On the other hand, it was reasonable to believe that no major decisions – especially one that would intersect both divisions – would be made before a new director of College Ready was identified and brought onboard. Keeping this in mind, we chose to move forward with our original mini-campaign strategy.

Presentation to Leadership

On November 11th, 2015, I presented a slide deck of the K-12/PS transitions strategy and recommendations to the U.S. Program Leadership Team. The presentation took place at the Seattle Headquarters on a “Home Week” when all of the U.S. Program staff is required to be on campus. I presented for 30 minutes with the last 30 minutes reserved for questions. The leadership team consisted of the President; the directors of CR, PS and USPAC; and 13 deputy directors and special advisors. Prior to the meeting I had sent a copy of the

executive summary for review and framed the document as a draft that would be followed up by a full portfolio analysis/review after receiving feedback from the USP leadership. My supervisor and I had meticulously revised the document in order to get a copy in front of the USPAC leadership team for feedback before presenting to the USP leadership. Gathering input from our internal team was incredibly important to ensure we were prepared to address questions about our logic and narrative, but also an important aspect of creating internal leadership support from our own division. Ultimately, this report was coming from a project housed in our division and represented USPAC. USPAC Director, Gavin Payne, and Senior Program Officer, John Denning, provided an introduction to the work and left the presentation in my hands.

From the outset my main goal was to describe *what* challenges students and the field faced, *why* the current context called for intervention, and *how* the foundation could potentially get involved through a series of investments in the K-12/PS transition space. The presentation, however, did not touch on any of aspects concerning internal operational structures. The President's office made it clear that this presentation was simply a learning opportunity meant to orient the leadership to this body of work. Therefore, no decisions would be made as a result of this meeting, although this would allow a series of follow-up conversations to happen around the ideas presented. Subsequently, I began the presentation by explaining our vision, a key symbol (bridge to opportunity), and the individual challenges of students. Most notably I focused on an image that showed paths with different levels of barriers according to wealth and race. I was also keenly aware that my logic, research, and data would be critical for an organization that is data and outcomes oriented.

The feedback came in waves throughout the presentation. Surprisingly, no one questioned the vision or theory of action, however large questions arose around the student-level recommendations focused on increasing the scope and quality of early academic remediation courses, and identifying texting interventions as solutions to improving student navigation. Several questions came from Allan Golston, President of U.S. Programs. How do states and regions make decisions about which intervention they should choose in this arena? Why do they want dual enrollment? What is the particular cost-benefit of any of these interventions? Other questions focused on the enabling factors, particularly around policy alignment. Some deputies discussed the lack of alignment when it came to Common Core State Standards, assessments, college entrance exams, and placement exams. One deputy asked, “Do we know exactly how many states are using PARCC or Smarter Balanced for college placement?” Additionally, in response to a slide that I showed denoting the number of students lost in a cohort of 100 beginning in high school, the number of students lost in the transition between high school and college, and the number of students lost after beginning college, many in the audience wanted to know how the foundation’s key focus states fared and if we could identify why students were being lost at each stage. Much of the discussion took place between the directors and deputies across divisions, while I provided input on the resulting questions. As my theory of scale, I recommended an expansion of the 12th-grade redesign work that we currently fund in three states to pilot a model for shared collaboration between sectors, focused on a tiered set of strategies that include early remediation, dual enrollment, and navigation supports for students. I chose a multisite replication scale strategy around a set of principles and preferred number of research-based

interventions. As we wrapped up our discussion, I tried to leave the leadership team with sense of urgency by stressing how the Common Core assessment results and the college completion agenda were currently forcing collaboration, and how we had the perfect opportunity to engage with and support these efforts.

Reflecting back on the presentation, I believe we were clear about our vision, theory of action, and set of recommendations. The resulting dialogue demonstrated that the audience was engaged and saw connections to their work because the transition space ultimately touches both divisions. Their concerns over the student navigation recommendations were expected from my point of view. I had concerns over this facet of the work due to the fact that this was an area where the foundation had touch-and-go investments in the past, and because this mostly falls outside of the scope of both strategies. While the Postsecondary division is working to create clarity around financial aid and college-match, they are working towards this at the systems (institutional) level and not necessarily the student level. My research supports some of their concerns in this arena – typically student navigation and decision-making interventions are high-touch and expensive to deliver. School counselors and non-profit organizations provide this information to students, however interventions to increase their productivity cost anywhere from \$600 to \$800 per student. Targeted texting interventions, however, cost as low as \$2 per student and can have an impact equal to that of expanding counseling services, depending on the population and area of focus (Castleman & Page, 2014).

I also realized that all of the discussion was focused on the particular aspects of external interventions and their impact. Although we were told to only

focus on external grant activity, I was surprised that no one called to question how we might go about organizing internally to make K-12/PS transitions grants. This may reflect the cautious nature of leaders to make too many disruptions to their current operating systems. However, it also made me feel as if the conversation was more of an intellectual exercise rather than a substantive possibility of future work.

After talking to others who attended the meeting, the sentiment was that the presentation was a success. One of the deputies on the Postsecondary team sent an email pledging some funding to the idea of exploring the potential for adaptive courseware technology in early remediation courses. Jill Nishi, from the President's office, sent a congratulatory note and gave us three main points to consider for follow-up on the full portfolio review. The follow-up consisted of providing greater evidence around the programmatic recommendations, a cost-benefit of the programmatic recommendations disaggregated by student population, and additional transition data in key focus states.

Follow-Up

The process for follow-up was to engage with USPAC leadership and confirm what we understood to be the main questions that came out of the discussion. In doing so, we crafted a response that identified three main areas for follow-up in the full review: 1) Provide information related to the numbers of students lost at each phase of transitions within key focus states, 2) Create a cost-benefit analysis of recommended K-12/PS transitions interventions, and 3) address additional questions concerning alignment policies and non-academic

factors within the full narrative. We then created a follow-up memo and full portfolio review taking into account the feedback from the ELT meeting. Our follow-up memo recommended a cross-divisional task force with specific objectives related to testing the K-12/PS transitions recommendations in 3 to 5 states as part of an expansion to the 12th-grade redesign grant made in the recommendations. (For follow-up memo, see Appendix H.) The follow-up memo to the ELT was released in January 2015 to the USPAC leadership for review, 2 months after the initial presentation. The 2-month delay resulted from the holiday break interruption and waiting from USPAC leaders about the correct type of response to the ELT feedback. In the meanwhile, I began to craft the outline of a work plan for a new K-12/PS transitions team that included the names of potential team members, objectives, timelines, and a sample of specific investments that could be made in a hypothetical state. We then waited another 3 months without any response from the USPAC LT as to how to proceed forward. We were aware that the leadership team had become preoccupied with the change in CR leadership and the passage of ESSA. Finally, in March we pushed the director of USPAC, Gavin Payne, for a response. At this point we just wanted clarity about whether we should discontinue any further work on the strategic project. At this point he informed me that the leadership shift and the passage of the ESSA had caused a recalculation of strategic priorities and funding that left no space for the K-12/PS transitions project.

K-12/PS Transitions Team Draft Work plan

Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Out of Scope
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the correct indicators for segmented populations across the Transition Zone (transition course candidates, summer melt, under match, Pell eligible not completing FAFSA) Create criteria for <i>Cost-Benefit Analysis</i> to be used by education leaders and policymakers that includes multiple Transitions interventions (Developmental education models and scaling, competency-based graduation requirements, dual enrollment funding, etc.) Identify key focus states to test and refine contextually appropriate models that include Transitions solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a method to ensure transparency, communication and inclusiveness across investments impacting CR and PS Develop recommendations for internal organization of Transition zone investments (governance, capacity, accountability, funding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P-16 state-by-state approach

Written progress every two weeks; monthly meeting with Transitions Team

Potential Team Members:

- Executive Sponsors: Gavin Payne, TBD
- Team Members: Yvonne Belanger (SPO, PS, RME), Ken Thompson (SPO, PNW), Eli Pristoop (PO, CR, Go Big) or Ash Vasudeva (SPO, CR, Go Big), Patrick Methvin (DD, PS, Delivery), Sarah Bauder (SPO, PS) or Greg Ratliff (SPO, PS), Bill Tucker (Special Advisor, CR, Go Far) [Assessment/Alignment], John Denning (SPO, CR USPAC) [USPAC Transitions], Jen Okwudili (PO, CR USPAC) [USPAC Transitions], Travis Reindl (SPO, PS USPAC Comms), Max Espinoza (SPO, PS USPAC), Mark Rigdon (DDSPM, USPAC) or Este Griffith (PM, Cross-Cutting) [P-16], John Fischer (CR USPAC) [Accountability 3.0]

Other Possibilities:

- Sara Allen, Brad Burnatek, Kelly DeForrest, Rahim Rajan

Outline and Approach

- I. Underlying Hypothesis

- Improving the Transition from High School to Postsecondary can significantly impact time to degree, student debt and college attainment
- II. Review Context
 - a. History of K-12/PS Joint Ventures at BMGF
 - b. History of K-12/PS Joint Ventures in the Field
 - c. History of previous attempts to create Transitions Portfolio of Grants
 - d. Review Current Landscape of K-12/PS Transition and Alignment Activities
- III. Refine Transitions Portfolio Framework
 - a. Theory of Action
 - b. Research Review
 - c. 2 Student Focused Strategies, 3 Enabling Strategies
 - d. Internal Organization Recommendations
 - e. Identify correct targets and indicators for key student segments in the Transition Zone
- IV. Refine and Test
 - a. Chose 2-3 States to test Co-Cubed Framework
 - i. Develop criteria for state selection (key focus states, demand, existing alignment, capacity, policy environment, etc.)
 - ii. Possible states include TN, FL, CA, TX, CO
 - iii. Identify data and evidence on loss points across the pipeline
 - iv. Brief description of 2-3 innovative states
- V. Analysis
 - a. Develop cost-benefit analysis to be used by education and policy leaders that include multiple transitions interventions
 - b. Identify key stakeholders in chosen states

Timeline

Key Activities	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May – 2017/2018</u>
	Data Collection & Analysis	Refine Transitions Portfolio – Strategy/Targets	Options & Foundation Action Recommendations	Operationalize Models in Target States

Investment Straw Man

1. Framework for Greater K-12/PS Collaboration – (\$900K)
 - Fund 2-3 Regions/States to undertake implementation efforts allong elements of the co-cubed framework.
 - Multi-year matching funding for staff positions, technical assistance or other local needs that address HS to PS Alignment/Transition
 - Year 1 – \$150K, Year 2- \$100K, Year 3 – \$50K for each region.
 - RFP, alignment to the Framework
 - Regional Governance system required

- External network support provider to convene regional teams semi-annually to share best practices and identify learnings for statewide scaling.
 - Support a group of regions for deep implementation, expansion to other regions involved in the planning process and support regional efforts to address aspects of the Framework.
2. Data/Information Systems and Analytics (\$225K)
- Support the development and expansion of high quality dashboard reports and analytic tools to support regional/state engagement with the data
3. Conducive Policy Environment (\$300K)
- Support the policy analysis and technical assistance necessary to make specific legislative and implementation recommendations.
 - Developmental education models and scaling, competency-based graduation requirements, dual enrollment funding
4. Supports and Systems (\$550K)
- Messaging and Communication Materials aligned to the Framework for districts and community college leaders to share with important stakeholders
 - Common Developmental Education Curriculum and content available through web-based platform for networks
 - Support the development of individualized tools (texting, planning and consumer information) that educators can use with students
 - Start up cost for dual credit training cohorts
 -

Figure 9. K-12/PS Cross-functional Team Workplan Outline

Strategic Project: Results and Analysis

Results of the Strategic Project

In describing the strategic project, I identified three key phases: 1) Understanding the internal functions of the foundation and the strategies of both the College Ready (K-12), Postsecondary, and USPAC teams, 2) Leading an analysis that would culminate in the development of a framework, theory of action and set of recommendations intended for the U.S. Program leadership to establish strategic priorities in the transition space, and 3) Operationalizing as much of the recommendations as possible during the remainder of my residency after receiving approval and potential funding for an expanded set of investments.

The first phase involved a first round of interviews with internal staff members across the foundation, attending CR and PS strategy sessions, and learning about the grantmaking process. This allowed me to grasp the technical nuances of the grantmaking process, and more importantly, the culture of the organization. Through this process I was able to understand the history of the organization, how concepts were developed and authorized, and how relationships played a role in moving new ideas forward. By late August I had completed a 2-week strategy and team-building retreat called “Summer Home” week, a week-long orientation, and numerous meetings with both the CR and PS teams. This completed the first phase.

The second phase of the work was the core of my strategic project and included a comprehensive analysis that culminated in a set of recommendations to the USP leadership. From September to November, I led the efforts to build a

new strategy that would improve high school to postsecondary transitions and collaboration across sectors. A large portion of the analysis included the second phase of interviews with key internal and external stakeholders across the foundation. In total, 25 interviews took place with senior program officers, special advisors, deputy directors, and directors representing all of the U.S. Program (Appendix B). Also, 13 external interviews and conversations with policy organizations, funders, technical assistance organizations, and research informed the analysis (Appendix B). As previously mentioned, many of the interview participants were identified by the K-12/PS transitions team before I arrived; however, new important stakeholders to connect with were identified and added throughout the process. In addition to formal interviews, numerous individual meetings, emails, and communications took place that informed the analysis. Early stakeholder engagement also helped us garner support for the project. The feedback received from interviews helped inform a comprehensive review of foundation investments, best practices in the field, and the related research as a basis for the review. The second phase was complete when I made my presentation to the U.S. Program Leadership (ELT) in November 2015.

The third phase of my project was to operationalize the recommendations after receiving authority to move forward and funding for the effort. This phase has not yet begun, partly because there has not been a set decision point or decision-making forum. Part of the internal recommendations explicitly identified the challenges related to authorization from leadership, the development of a grantmaking process, and accountability structures within the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. My concern is that this project will again languish if there is no executive sponsor who advocates for the next stage of the work.

Either the leadership has to provide authority to for the development of an internal organizational structure to make K-12/PS transitions grants, or the leadership must designate the internal organizational structure. Ideally, upon receiving authorization to move forward, the next phase of the work would be to lead the development of the aforementioned internal structures, preferably through a joint CR and PS team. The team's responsibility would then be to develop a set of grants intended to build out the full portfolio aimed at improving K-12/PS transitions and alignment.

I am fully aware that my role was to provide the analysis and recommendations for the K-12/PS transitions portfolio and to operationalize as much of the work as possible within the residency time period. Before I could lead an effort to operationalize the K-12/PS transitions portfolio, a case had to be made for defining the strategic philanthropic framework. This was the work of building influence for change. The K-12/PS transitions portfolio is unique in the sense that it falls outside of foundation's existing divisions. In any other case a new set of grantmaking activities may have been approved and a grantmaking portfolio would have been developed in a more traditional manner. However, since the K-12/PS transitions portfolio falls outside of the scope of both divisions, there is no one to take up the mantle of work and no program officer that is accountable for the work. As a result, the K-12/PS transitions portfolio may simply remain the function of a few USPAC grants aimed at creating greater policy alignment between both sectors.

Strategic Project	Progress
Phase 1	
Understand the grantmaking process and division strategies	Complete
Phase 2	
Analysis of current and historical investments	Complete
Interviews among key U.S. program staff and grantees	Complete
Landscape analysis of programmatic and policy developments	Complete
Present a set of options and recommendation to leadership summarizing findings of analysis	Complete
Phase 3	
Develop K-12/PS transitions implementation plan	Emergent
Operationalize K-12/PS transitions portfolio and grantmaking	Emergent

Figure 10. Results to date of the K-12/PS transitions portfolio development based on phases of the strategic project. The authorization and timeline for phase 3 has yet to be determined.

To analyze why my strategic project unfolded as it did, I employ two frames of analysis and data collection. First, I analyze interviews with key program officers and leaders across the foundation, during phase one and two of the project. I discuss the data gathered from the interviews in the results of this capstone because it was a central to identifying the internal and external challenges and opportunities for the K-12/PS transitions project early on. This was crucial to creating engagement, buy-in, and legitimacy as we presented our findings to USP leadership. Second, I analyze my ability to influence and lead a change process using Kanter's 7 Skills of Change Masters in the context of developing a strategic grantmaking strategy. I also address the value of factors such as senior-level sponsorship and resistance to change.

Using Interviews from Foundation Program Officers and Leaders to Inform the Project

The following themes are from a set of three open-ended questions that took place through one-on-one interviews with internal foundation stakeholders:

- 1) What part of your work is impacted by high school to postsecondary transitions?
- 2) Historically, what have been the greatest successes and challenges in the transition space at the foundation?
- 3) How can we potentially be more effective in the K-12/PS transitions space (externally, internally)?

The responses reveal the past and current work of the foundation in the K-12/PS transition space as well as challenges and opportunities to move the work forward. I highlight the most salient themes for each question and the corresponding insights into those themes.

Question 1: What part of your work is impacted by high school to postsecondary transitions?

Alignment and collaboration are most relevant to the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. As I probed deeper, it became apparent that this was a response to the Common Core, the related assessments, enrollment, and placement in higher education. Later, I learned that standards, assessment, and placement alignment were the only explicit K-12/PS transitions work designated by the foundation publicly. I made sure to note that a tie-in to the success of the Common Core would be essential to the recommendation. Moreover, this supported the notion that USPAC was the right division to lead the K-12/PS transitions charge. I was

also aware that some respondents identified areas that intersected with their work, yet were not explicitly part of any foundation grants. In particular, *multiple measures and non-cognitive factors* were brought up as important elements of the work impacting the success of students. The RKA supported the idea that non-academic, social/behavioral factors were important aspects of student transitions; however, I was also aware of the foundation's reluctance to fund this work historically. I made note to identify if the foundation had ever considered grants in this arena and why they had chosen not to pursue this avenue of work. Although several other interventions were named, such as developmental education solutions, adaptive courseware, and integrated planning and advising services, they were largely isolated to the program officer in question. Overall, I found the responses to the first question to reveal that respondents had a considerable amount of interest in the K-12/PS transitions work and had already begun investing in efforts that had overlap across divisions.

The responses reveal a number of key areas of focus that program officers and foundation leaders believe to intersect with the K-12/PS transitions domain. I used this information to orient myself to the degree of engagement each stakeholder had with the K-12/PS transitions domain. The following responses reveal a number of efforts and interventions that have significant overlap and support the findings of the RKA.

Question 2: Historically, what have been the greatest successes and challenges in the K-12/PS transition space at the foundation, externally and internally?

Externally

Opportunities residing from the Common Core and the college completion agenda have created momentum for cross-sector collaboration around early academic remediation, postsecondary affordability, free college tuition, transition courses, and early college high schools. As Kanter states, “In successful change efforts, the first step is making sure people act with sufficient urgency, with behavior that looks for opportunities and problems that energize colleagues, that beams a sense of “let’s go!”” I saw this as a unique period where both education systems were beginning to come together around the notion of college readiness and affordability. Many program officers and external partners spoke about the desire of states to create a more seamless system that shored up academic readiness, created greater alignment, and affordable postsecondary options for students. For that reason, it would be important to capitalize on the momentum already being generated externally.

Large silos still exist between both sectors that create challenges impacting alignment, sharing data across systems, and collaborating successfully. Several respondents detailed the challenges that still remained when considering cross-sector collaboration and alignment. I heard several stories of K-12 and higher education leaders who had never met. I was also told of the difficulties associated with maintaining cross-sector collaborations. One respondent stated that people are excited to meet initially until the difficulties associated with change become a reality. Additionally, respondents felt that higher education still had hit-or-miss engagement with K-12 when it came to identifying definitions of college readiness or determining cut scores for college placement. I noted that many respondents felt there was a need for collaboration, but warned of the pitfalls associated with this type of coordination. This

supported the contention from Fredrick Hess and Hal Lawson in my RKA that collaboration needed to go beyond coordination to address adaptive/wicked problems if real change is to impact implementation and practice. Therefore, I felt it would be important to focus on the principles of collaboration as a key component of the K-12/PS transitions recommendations moving forward.

Internally

The lessons from early college high schools, the maturity of the foundation strategies and the potential for PS interventions early in the pipeline are opportunities to build upon. Interviewees indicated that early college high schools were early investments from a previous strategy that had both a K-12 and postsecondary focus. Many felt the model was not scalable, but had specific elements such as dual enrollment, early remediation, curricular, and postsecondary placement alignment that could be examined for best practices. Additionally, program officers from both College Ready and Postsecondary felt that the Postsecondary division now had the growth and clarity of strategy to begin working alongside their College Ready colleagues in states. They believed this could be a window for alignment and coordination in cross-over states. Moreover, others felt that some of the Postsecondary investments such as transition courses, adaptive courseware, and integrated planning/advising services had potential to be utilized earlier in the K-12 pipeline. I used this information to build on a “window of opportunity” metaphor that described why the current timing was right for a K-12/PS transitions focus.

The lack of formal structures, accountability, and an overarching vision for the work are challenges towards gaining momentum for any explicit K-12/PS transitions investments. It was made clear that without any direction from leadership, accountability tied to the performance of program officers, or a budget for this work, it would continue to languish. Several joint efforts had taken place between CR and PS over the years, however many of these were prior to 2008 under a different strategic focus. The Facebook College Knowledge Challenge was brought up as an example of an effort that created many web-based applications intended to assist students making postsecondary planning decisions, yet may have added to the complexity of decision making for students and families. Therefore, the effort was abandoned without any momentum for learning from the effort. I also saw that the lack of an explicit Theory of Action working towards a set of shared goals may have over time contributed to the abandoning of such efforts. Many of the internal challenges and responses to these challenges were mentioned during question #3 of the interview.

Question 3: How can we potentially be more effective in the K-12/PS transitions space?

Externally

Identify promising opportunities in the field to engage and support grantees with the major questions they are struggling with. In general, respondents agree that examples of strong collaborations need to be identified and brought to the forefront. Tennessee was mentioned several times as an example of a state working in coordination across K-12 and postsecondary that can be used as provocation for a strong focus. As I probed deeper throughout my

time at the foundation, Tennessee had been noted for providing the first two years of community college free, using 12th grade to deliver early academic remediation for students, and establishing co-requisite remediation in postsecondary. However, many of the other cross-sector collaboration examples given by respondents were local and not statewide. It was incumbent upon me to find other examples of promising opportunities across the country. Other promising interventions – many funded by BMGF – included dual enrollment, adaptive courseware, and integrated planning and advising services (IPAS) as potential areas for exploration in the transition space. Respondents identified these specific interventions as having positive evidence of success for academic achievement, college enrollment, and postsecondary attainment. I knew I would have to look at the research and document exactly how effective each of these suggested interventions were. Additionally, these interventions were mentioned as having the potential to be shared across both systems. Adaptive courseware and IPAS were two interventions that were cited as having potential in both K-12 and postsecondary. At this point, my understanding of both of these interventions was extremely rudimentary. I would have to find out more about the specifics of these interventions and whether the foundation had explored their potential applicability in both sectors.

Respondents also felt the need to turn to our external partners and ask, “What questions do they have that we don’t have answers to?” One of the major strengths of the foundation is the ability to advance knowledge and information across the sector through funding research, convening networks, and using communications vehicles. A few interviewees felt that we needed to first identify the major questions within the transition space, such as, “Why don’t K-12 and

higher education communicate more?” This would help the foundation narrow the scope of the K-12/PS transitions work to identify the major pain points impacting students, families, schools, districts, and states.

Identify other funders and external partners who focus on the transition space and have consistent engagement by focusing on an explicit piece of the work. Although the foundation had engagement with other funders, I was unaware if they had partnerships focused specifically in this area. I also noted that I would have to get very concrete when defining the specific elements of K-12/PS transitions. I was also aware that the foundation already had some engagement with K-12 policy related to college and career ready assessments, and postsecondary programs related to developmental education in K-12. Both could be considered an element of student transitions. I made note that a clear framework and identification of parameters would be important for the field and foundation to define this scope of work. Student transitions and alignment can potentially touch every piece of the education pipeline, however, the high school to postsecondary transition point was a natural place to focus the work.

Existing silos create major challenges in the K-12/PS transitions arena. One senior program officer stated, “Right now, K-12 and higher education practitioners believe if they do their job well then there is no need to focus on student transitions. If both K-12 and postsecondary leaders truly believe that to be the case, then it is important to show them how we lose students without fixing transitions. We need to show them it is essential to prepare students academically and help them prepare to go through the steps of entry and

completion.” From my time in a state agency and as a school counselor, I knew the reasons for the silo-oriented nature of both sectors were complex and not easily explainable. Personally, I felt the incentives were not in place for cross-sector collaboration. The funding and accountability mechanisms in K-12 did not emphasize preparing students to transition across domains, other than preparing them academically. On the other hand, postsecondary institutions had limited funding and capacity to work with K-12 institutions. My hope was that the maturity of the Common Core, and higher education accountability in the form of performance-based funding, would create new opportunities for collaboration that we could capitalize on.

Internally

Focusing on the major elements of change is necessary to move the work forward within the foundation (authority from leadership, value proposition, link to existing work). Most notably respondents keyed in on three major elements of change. First, prioritization and authority from leadership was mentioned as necessary to move the work forward within the foundation. One program officer stated, “Leadership can set the tone for the importance of this work, prioritize, and provide capacity”. To accelerate change, a leader’s role is “knocking the barriers to making ideas a reality” (Kotter, 2014, pg. 97). I was able to gather from these responses that the foundation operated in a highly hierarchical manner, therefore, respondents sought the blessing of leadership before undertaking new innovative efforts. Others were unsure how strongly leadership felt about the K-12/PS transitions focus and were cautious about pressing the issue. Second, a vision or value proposition was stated as something

that was needed to create buy-in from both divisions. One program officer noted that K-12/PS transitions work was difficult to put in a box or easily define, resulting in the potential danger of being out of scope. Additionally, a senior advisor stated, “There needs to be a clear problem definition and understanding of why this work is important and the program or policy levers to pull”. One respondent believed that once the value proposition is figured out then the rest is classic grantmaking – testing models for different groups of students and figuring out how to measure if it is getting better. Third, linking the K-12/PS transitions work with the existing strategies in both CR and PS was mentioned as a critical aspect of change. Specifically, respondents mentioned the maturity of the Postsecondary division strategy and the ability to have both CR and PS teams working in states collectively. I noted how often strategy came up as both a challenge and solution to creating change. Perceptibly, a logic-oriented approach was highly valued in the foundation. Program officers felt that this was a new opportunity to create a K-12/PS transitions strategy that was integrated with the priorities of the other teams, however difficult that may be because they are pulling different levers – teacher professionalism versus institutional reform. Yet, state and local engagement was mentioned as an opportunity to support cross-sector collaboration, with a focus on implementation.

Explicit structures for cross-fertilization across teams is needed. Many respondents spoke to the difficulty of creating a sustainable and high-functioning method for joint grantmaking within a current structure that only has two major

divisions of work.⁷ Overwhelmingly, program officers felt that this work could not be effective as an ad hoc project or set of meetings. Others also felt that designating one new program officer to the K-12/PS transitions portfolio would not be sufficient for creating real collaboration across divisions. Creating *internal accountability* for the work and *identifying shared goals and metrics* were identified as ways to connect both divisions.

The internal and external interviews informed the recommendations and provided validation during the presentation process. From the interviews I learned the most important aspects of the work that program officers and key foundation stakeholders valued, and also what they understood as the foundation's values. I pulled out the key themes and quotes from the interviews and embedded them within the final slide deck presentation and within the final portfolio review document. Most notably, I focused in on early academic remediation in 12th grade and navigational information as programmatic areas of focus. I was also attuned to the need for creating greater alignment, coordination, and collaboration across systems externally and internally. As a result, the K-12/PS transitions recommendations included principles of collaboration as a key area of focus. Fortunately, one of the existing USPAC transition grants had developed a framework for collaboration and coordination centered on 12th-grade redesign. We utilized many of the key concepts as a foundation for the recommendations.

⁷ USP also consists of the Pacific Northwest Division (PNW) and most recently an early learning division. For the purposes of the capstone I focus on the two major divisions of the U.S. Program.

Coding and applying themes to the question responses was difficult because of the constant shift from discussing internal change with external change, however I was eventually able to parse this out and make sense of the phenomenon. Since the foundation has created silos similar to the field, many of the same challenges are reflected within the internal and external environment. The findings from the interviews validated my initial inclination to focus on both external and internal elements of change in order to drive the work forward. Although I was not sure how much traction I would gain on the internal elements of change, I knew that the interview findings would provide my recommendations with additional credibility and validity. My task was then to take the complexity of cross-sector collaboration (internally and externally), create a compelling vision that aligned with the organization's current vision, and identify the problem to be solved as well as a set of solutions.

"The barrier to change is not too little caring; it is too much complexity. To turn caring into action, we need to see a problem, see a solution, and see the impact. But complexity blocks all three steps."

-Bill Gates, Harvard
Commencement 2007

The internal and external interviews provided me with greater clarity about the external and internal challenges and opportunities associated with K-12/postsecondary transitions and alignment. It became evident to me through the interviews and discussions with the K-12/PS transitions team that the entire project would encompass a change management process focused on building

influence and leading change. I used Kanter’s 7 Skills of Change Masters to develop the content associated with my project and to develop the internal support that I would need for the project to take hold.

Leading Change through 7 Key Skills

Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s “7 skills of change masters” highlight 3 distinct phases of change underscored in the RKA, which I used to analyze my own leadership throughout my strategic project and execution of the theory of action. I also address the value of factors such as senior-level sponsorship and resistance to change.

PHASES	SKILLS OF CHANGE MASTERS
Generating Ideas	Tuning Into the Environment
	Kaleidoscope Thinking
Selling Ideas	Inspiring Vision
	Building Coalitions
Developing & Implementing Ideas	Nurturing the Work Team
	Persisting through the Difficult Middle
	Making Heroes

Figure 11. Leading Change: Kanter’s 7 Essential Skills of Change Masters

Generating Ideas

Skill 1: Tuning into the Environment: Sensing Needs and Opportunities

The desire to create a body of work linking K-12 and postsecondary was partially in place before I arrived. A 2013 effort occurred and culminated in a presentation to the USP leadership. This effort was spearheaded by several program officers and was supported by the previous deputy director of the CR

USPAC team. USPAC also has divisional structures that support either CR or PS. Although this effort never gained traction beyond several small grants aimed at further exploring the transition space, a new director of USPAC had reinvigorated this body of work by bringing in a resident fellow to lead the work. Kanter states that change masters are forever mindful of the surrounding environment and able to identify gaps between what is and what could be. In this sense, the director may have been catalyzed by implementation of the Common Core or listened directly to the needs of external partners to bring forth another K-12/PS transitions effort. In my own work, I have always found that the best way to tune into the environment is to hear directly from those engaged in the work. When I began the Arizona College Access Network, I spent the first 3 months listening to counselors, college access programs, students, and community partners. Not only did it help me create vital relationships, it gave me the information I needed to begin crafting a vision.

As a resident I found it essential to talk to the program officers, but also to stay attuned to developments occurring in the field. For instance, PARCC and Smarter Balanced scores were due to come out throughout the 2015 year, the White House and presidential candidates were talking about free community college, and higher education was under pressure to reduce costs and increase graduation rates. On one of my first trips as a resident with the foundation was to meet with grantees in Texas about developmental education practices. The program officer and I spoke with community college presidents, governing boards, K-12 leaders, and advocates who spoke to their desire to reduce student remediation and smooth the transition from high school to college for students. I saw how a new set of external demands for K-12 and higher education were

creating pressure for both systems to come together around academic readiness, student transitions, and affordability.

I was also fortunate to have a K-12/PS transitions team that had previously put together a large body of evidence and set of recommendations for the K-12/PS transitions portfolio before I arrived. Therefore, I was able to diagnose their existing framework and provide an updated framework within the current context of the education landscape. Further, the aforementioned internal interviews provided me with additional context, best practices and a set of recommendations to consider. External interviews and visits throughout my time at the foundation also provided me with additional data to begin generating ideas; however, the timing of the presentation only allowed me to gather minimal feedback before generating a set of recommendations. I also found it challenging to interact with external grantees and partners throughout my time at the foundation. Due to the size of the foundation, internal processes had been developed that require filtering requests to communicate with grantees through a program officer that serves as one singular point of contact. I found it challenging to identify whom the point of contact was for particular grantees and challenging to get a timely response from program officers. Plus, I also found myself having to justify my intent for contacting a grantee. This often created numerous steps before even attempting to schedule a meeting with a grantee. Therefore, my interaction with external grantees was limited and took place mainly after the presentation to USP leadership. The external interviews included key policymaking organizations, advocacy organizations, technical assistance organizations, and institutional leaders. (For list of internal and external interviews and meetings, see Appendix B.)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1=weak and 5=strong, I would assess my own performance in skill #1: Tuning into the environment: Sensing needs and opportunities as a 4. I believe I remained curious about new changes on the horizon and investigated occurrences of change within and outside of the organization. Although I built upon an existing set of grants in College Ready focused on early developmental education, I sought new avenues to combine academic supports with navigation information and shared data systems. I sought out unexpected sources by identifying new stakeholders to reach out to and make numerous connections with existing and potential grantees. I was also able to capitalize on a window of opportunity that ultimately led to the ELT presentation in October. Despite these positive steps, I gave myself a 4 because I believe I could have made greater progress talking to external grantees and also because I viewed this activity as linear instead of cyclical. This was partly a function of my condensed timeline to present and the opaque nature of the internal decision making process for my project. At points in time the deliverables and supplemental requests of my project were complete, however unexpected developments in the foundation and the field continued to impact the importance of my project throughout my time as a resident. The loss of the College Ready director and the passage of ESSA created two momentous disruptions that consumed the full attention of the leadership team. The entire focus of USPAC leadership was now attuned to supporting state implementation of ESSA and it would have been a stretch to convince the team that the K-12/PS transitions project was an area of priority.

Skill 2: Kaleidoscope Thinking: Stimulating Breakthrough Ideas

Kaleidoscope thinking is a method for taking identified opportunities and stimulating breakthrough ideas. Innovators find ways to take the multitude of data elements that everyone else sees and reassembling those elements into a new set of possibilities. Kanter states that change masters are able to construct new approaches to pre-identified problems. They challenge conventional assumptions and existing routines. As a resident I was essentially brought in to act as a kaleidoscope. Being an outsider to the organization allowed me to bring a new perspective and set of ideas to the work. As a resident fellow I was not tied to any singular body of work – I was able to float between teams in order to view the challenges and opportunities from multiple perspectives. This presented a great deal of advantages, such as being able to meet with individuals across divisions, sitting in on strategy sessions for both divisions, and attending social events with both teams. I attended weekly meetings with both the College Ready and Postsecondary teams and was a part of strategy sessions with both teams. However, I also found the resident position to be somewhat disconnected at times.

As a resident, I often found myself to be somewhere between a consultant and a team member. My work usually did not fall within the “rhythm of the business.” Therefore, I was left out of meetings and conversations that dealt directly with strategy execution and grantmaking. This directly impacted my ability to feel like a close member of any one team. Even within the K-12/PS transitions team, I felt like I was giving updates and gathering feedback more than I was co-creating strategy and a body of work. Shortly after beginning my initial review, I realized that although I had a K-12/PS transitions team in the

USPAC division, the function of the team was different than I had imagined. The team was comprised of my supervisor, (representing CR USPAC), an assistant program officer who shortly after became a full program officer (CR USPAC), and another senior program officer (representing PS USPAC). Also, one of the team members, representing PS USPAC was transitioning out of his role and into a new communications-oriented role. This meant that his involvement on the team would lessen over time and eventually dissipate. Also, the members of team had a full portfolio of work, and each managed one exploratory K-12/PS transitions grant. Subsequently, when we met weekly for a half-hour, our meetings consisted of me providing updates on our work, discussion of the current grants, and their feedback regarding my initial findings and framing. It became apparent that I would be treated more as a consultant building a set of recommendations than a leader of a team working to strategize and co-create a set of recommendation together.

Yet, as a result of my ongoing interviews throughout the organization, I began building a reputation as the “go-to” person for work that overlapped or fell between strategies. On numerous occasions I was looped into conference calls or emails discussing investments or ideas that fell between strategies. I specifically documented this taking place for discussions over college-match, financial aid texting interventions, and early warning/ advising data systems. I found this to be a good sign that word of our efforts had spread throughout the foundation.

By the end of October I had gained an understanding of the opportunities for this project and a way of differentiating my set of recommendations.

Typically, organizations encourage kaleidoscope thinking through a number of

approaches that include a post-mortem on a previous approach, benchmarking outside of their industry, holding large brainstorming sessions, or holding competitions for innovation (Kanter, 2005). In my case, I used a combination of strategies to gather feedback from internal employees through open-ended interview questions, meeting with external partners, researching best practices, and brainstorming with the existing K-12/PS transitions team. Once I developed a set of ideas for the work, my supervisor and I worked to create clarity and coherence with the existing foundation strategies.

In order for me to create a value proposition for the K-12/PS transitions portfolio, I had to understand the value proposition of the foundation. Strategic giving must begin with the definition and core value proposition that declares a purpose or activity worth pursuing (Frumkin, 2008). The value proposition chosen by BMGF for the United States was clearly created to maximize the public good by improving the education system as means for improving economic mobility through the acquisition of high-quality jobs. The College Ready value proposition supports the larger U.S. Programs value proposition by focusing on increasing the number of students deemed college ready. Postsecondary supports the foundation's values by increasing the number of students who successfully graduate from postsecondary institutions. Keeping this in mind, we designed a value proposition aimed at ensuring the smooth transition of students across systems, leading to a timely and affordable degree. As a result, we had a solid amount of content and a vision and theory of action regarding how we would execute the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. What we did not have was a compelling case to inspire action. Finalizing the content related to my project concluded the first phase.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1=weak and 5=strong, I would assess my own performance as a 4. I gave myself a 4 rather than a 5 mainly because I believe I took the safe route to generating new ideas. My reasons for doing so were twofold: 1) I generally do not like to create new ideas alone or without the input of and an iterative process from others and 2) a general body of K-12/PS transitions work had already been created and it was easier to build upon the work rather than tear it down. As previously mentioned, the K-12/PS transitions team acted more as in advisory role than an actually teaming function. At certain intervals my supervisor and I were able to brainstorm, generate new ideas and conceptualize them as part of the project. However, most of the time I was left to generating new concepts on my own. Ideally, I would have liked to receive input from an internal team made up of staff across the foundation. This would have generated a host of new ideas, a framework, buy-in, and possibly a small coalition to begin advancing the work. Yet, this was not an option at this early stage. Also, the K-12/PS transitions team had been closely responsible for developing the last set of K-12/PS transitions recommendations. I did not want to create a drastically different approach when I felt the content was high quality; the recommendations just needed an internal approach to change as well. I did take a risk in including the internal organizational structures to change. At first I received a small amount of resistance to the idea from the K-12/PS transitions team; however, as the project seemed to be making slow progress, they became adamant that the internal change recommendations needed to be at the forefront.

Selling Ideas

Skill 3: Setting the Theme: Inspiring Vision

Completing the analysis and generating the content was merely half the battle. In order to create “true” change, our idea had to be shaped into a theme that inspired action. According to Kanter, successful organizations are the hardest to sell on a need for change because they are often complacent, comfortable and do not see the need for change. Often times, processes are running so tightly that there is no time for envisioning change, or they may believe that they are already doing what they need to do to stay on top. Although I found this to be true when it came to receiving capacity from leadership, I also found that most of the foundation supported the ideas of a K-12/PS transitions focus. Throughout my first 4 months at the organization I had not run into any specific instances of resistance, but I saw my first explicit example when an email came through my inbox. The email had been sent by a senior program officer on the CR team, and had copied several other program officers and a few deputies. I was also copied on this email – most likely, because the email addressed overlap of the two divisions. Within the email, the program officer had stated that he saw several areas of overlap when it came to the work of CR and PS. He highlighted 5 major areas of the work and asked for input and feedback from others. Several program officers responded and built on his ideas. As more and more program officers and deputies were added to the email chain, one deputy responded by stating that cross-division collaboration had been tried before and failed because there was a limited overlap of work. When speaking of resistance to change, Kanter states, “Past resentments remain out of sight when everything is in a steady state, but spring into action when you need cooperation for something new or different.” Although I did not respond to the deputy, I took note of the resistance and heeded Kanter’s response, “Leaders should

consider gestures to acknowledge the past before sailing into the future.” I used this input to make sure I gave credit to previous efforts, took advantage of a new window of opportunity, and showed how the K-12/PS transitions portfolio supported the current work of both divisions. Change masters must get people to see the value beyond the hardship of change and the prize waiting at the end (Kanter, 2011). This includes more than just communication, it requires inspiring visions, a picture of the future, prose, and imagination.

We searched for a theme or a symbol that could appeal to both the CR and PS teams. At the same time, the Education Learning Forum took place. At the forum, Allan Golston spoke of the interconnected work of the foundation as a bridge to opportunity for students. At that moment we knew we had a unifying symbol, one that would appeal to both teams and one that was utilized by the USP leadership. In our presentation we worked to deliver a message around strengthening the bridge to opportunity through K-12/PS transitions and alignment. We began our presentation with two major images. One was an image of students on separate tracks with varied numbers of obstacles according to how much wealth or privilege they had. This image symbolized the challenges that disadvantaged students faced within our current system, which was designed to restrict access to higher education. Secondly, we showed the stories and images of real students. The students explained their challenges, their paths, and their current struggles. We wanted to put a face to the students and show the complexity and consequences of failure. Reflecting back on this, I am not sure we were able to create an emotional tie-in within the short amount of time we had for the presentation. Since we only had 30 minutes to deliver the presentation, only 5 to 8 minutes of the presentation was spent on the student

perspective. Although I am not sure we could have spent more time on this, I wonder if we could have chosen a more effective way to deliver the message through actual student voices. Our intent was to demonstrate how the K-12/PS transitions focus allowed students to overcome barriers at the practice level and removed barriers at the policy level. We differentiated segments of students by far-below college ready, nearly ready, and college ready, and showed how specific interventions within our recommendations impacted each of them.

Understanding that the most salient element of strategic philanthropy for BMGF is the logic model or theory of change, we spent a bulk of the presentation explaining our framework and rationale. A logic model creates a formal explication of how a set of philanthropic interventions set in the K-12/PS transitions space would achieve its intended ends. (For logic model, see Appendix D.) Clarifying our logic model was a natural place to begin defining our set of giving targets. The organization highly values strategy, data-driven decision-making, and results-oriented investing. Frumkin states that strategic giving requires contextually appropriate decisions being made about when to pursue top-down strategies aimed at changing the intellectual grounding of a field of practice and when to seek bottom-up or grassroots solutions aimed at working through local groups.

One of the critical elements of feedback we received from the internal interviewees was to clearly articulate a theory of action for this work. Initially, I found this to be a challenge because of the scope of the problem. Would we address this challenge at the national level, the state level or the regional level? Also, would our theory of change include programmatic investments and policy-oriented investments? I decided to take a very broad approach to developing the

theory of change by utilizing the data elements I had collected to create broad strategies that were both programmatic and policy-oriented. My specific recommendation then included a set of investment recommendations that had the greatest likelihood of executing those strategies at scale. This took a considerable amount of time to develop, and I had great trepidation about veering into a space of the work that was outside of the scope of the foundation's strategies. One deputy, however, pressed the issue of non-cognitive and social factors on one round of early feedback. He stated correctly that these factors were important components to the success of students and that they were missing in our theory of action. It was his contention that our theory of action and recommendations should push the envelope of foundation's thinking. Although I knew this was important, I decided to only highlight the informational aspects of student navigation in our theory of action since it was more closely aligned with previous investments related to consumer information. I then addressed social and non-cognitive factors within our presentation to leadership by stating that our theory of action was a place where the foundation could add the most value to the work, considering the current body of investments.

The recommendations then focused on 5 major strategies – the first 2 were programmatic and the next 3 focused on enabling factors. Our most salient point of focus within our theory of action was about the types of collaborations we felt were necessary to create innovative and sustainable change. As mentioned in the RKA, creating greater K-12/postsecondary alignment calls for new types of shared partnerships. Our set of strategies not only included programmatic elements, but system-level elements that we felt were important to truly create

change in the sector. However, the one thing we did not do was place a timeline on our recommended investments or attach dollar amounts to our recommendations. We did not have enough information because we had not approached grantees nor developed a full scope of work in any particular state. We framed this as a potential next step of the project once we gathered enough understanding of the challenges and potential direction to move forward.

For the third skill; Setting the Theme: Inspiring Vision, I also give myself a 4. I believe I aimed for a large dream with grand aspirations. I sought to create a symbol by using the bridge to opportunity as a metaphor. This spoke to the ongoing work of the foundation and tied the articulation of our vision to the values of the foundation. We also gave credit to previous iterations of the work and noted the difficulty associated with past efforts, while explaining how the present window of opportunity provided a new way forward. I also used my own personal story of being a counselor and statewide leader in access and success strategies to demonstrate my personal passion, enthusiasm, and conviction for the work. Most importantly we balanced our vision with a pragmatic drive to action and sought to create clarity by grounding our recommendations in evidence. We knew that our data and evidence would most likely be scrutinized and questioned at some point. Although we did not have enough time to engage the audience with our student stories, I believe we did the best we could with the time available. However, I realize that creating an inspiring vision and presenting it one time is not enough to move others towards action.

Skill 4: Enlisting Backers and Supporters: Getting Buy-In, Building Coalitions

The fourth skill was the last skill that I was able to employ during my time at the foundation. I knew that creating bridges across divisions would be an incredibly difficult endeavor even with a mandate from leadership. Potential change masters must sell the idea more widely: attract the right backers and supporters, entice investors and defenders, get buy-in from stakeholders in a position to help or harm the venture at later stages (Kanter, 2007). Both my supervisor and I knew this was one of the most important aspects of moving the work forward. We felt that we had to organize a personal network of support similar to that of a campaign. Before beginning our campaign, I worked to create a plan that allowed us to prepare, understand our target and explicitly center our “ask”. My main concern was that we would not have enough concrete actions for our coalition to take. I used portions of Goodman’s (2015) Framework to create Collaborative Influence and Ganz’s (2010) Framework for Leadership, Organization and Social Movements. First we sought to build an effective coalition that included program officers and leadership throughout the foundation. Creating collaborative influence begins with knowing your intent, knowing your approach and knowing your audience (Goodman, 2015). A natural place for us to begin was our list of internal interviewees and gauging their interest in supporting the work. We mapped out those who we knew supported our work, those who may be uninformed, and those who needed to be informed. Our request then centered on identifying barriers, then action catalysts that respond to those barriers, based on discrete values. This is supported by John Kotter’s central conclusion from the classic *The Heart of Change* (2002) that change occurs when speaking to people’s feelings.

Action Barriers	Action Catalyst	Value
Inertia	Urgency	Equity, Opportunity, FOMO
Apathy	Anger	Being Heard, Difference Making
Isolation	Solidarity	Teamwork, Support, Collaboration, Knowledge Sharing, Relationships

Figure 12. Action Barriers, Action Catalysts to Change Driven by Values, from Goodman's Creating Collaborative Influence Framework

We then organized our timeline as a campaign, with a specific beginning, call to action and end point. Ganz (2010) states that a campaign is a strategic and motivational way to organize a change activity. Campaigns target specific objectives, one at a time.

Timeline

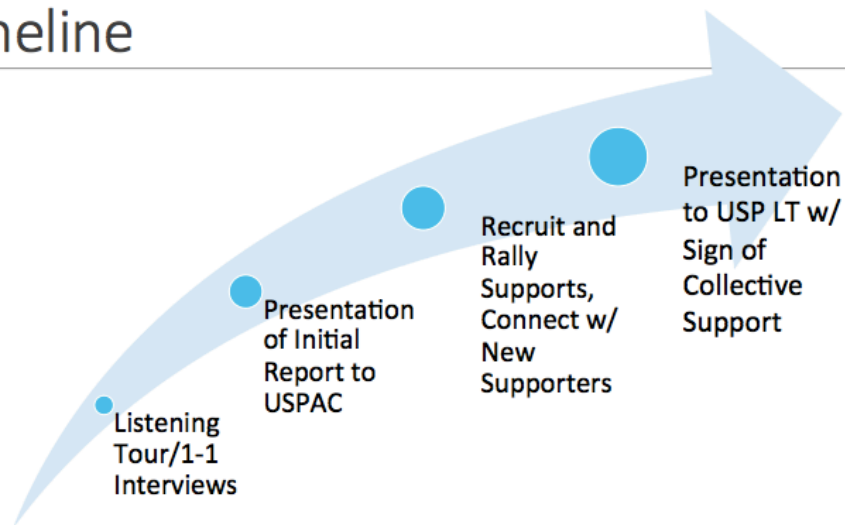


Figure 13. Mini-Campaign Timeline

Our core audience was identified as the K-12/PS transitions team, the program officers directly impacted by a new K-12/PS transitions portfolio, and others who supported the work. The core audience was the core of our coalition and mainly consisted of those that were interviewed as part of the listening tour. I then crafted an email to those supporters touching on the all 3 action catalysts by highlighting the importance of the work for students, but also the opportunity for greater internal collaboration, knowledge sharing, and support. My specific “ask” then included 2 requests: provide feedback to the initial executive summary and connect with other program officers and their deputy directors to tell them about the potential benefits to their work. Our goal was to communicate the progress of our current efforts and inspire individuals to take action. According to Kanter (2005), change masters do not just communicate, they over-communicate. Our hope was that this would create momentum and keep us on the minds of leadership before they even attended the USP presentation. Coalitions can help avoid the risks that change agents can be undercut, however they are extremely fragile and contain those who look to see the way the political winds are blowing.

In response, change masters must continue to communicate, widen their coalition, and constantly focus on selling the message. I also personally spoke with 4 program officers that I knew were passionate about the work. One program officer on the Postsecondary team wanted to attend the leadership meeting in order to provide support and feedback, however he was unable to attend because of the limited audience. The other members of the K-12/PS transitions team had brief meetings or conversations with certain deputy directors that we felt were critical to garnering support. I crafted a document

with specific talking points for the other transition team members to use. At least 5 deputy directors were contacted as a result. Communication was key to creating buy-in and momentum moving towards the presentation. Looking back, we made a critical mistake ending the campaign at the presentation. Due to the fact that the USP leadership presentation was not intended to result in a decision, we ended our campaign prematurely and failed to expand the coalition. The campaign should have lasted until we received a decision whether we would receive authority, capacity, or funding to move forward with the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. This would have allowed us to continue a constant communications push and effort to determine a decision.

The demonstration of skill #4 was where I felt I fell short. I rated myself as a 3 out of 5 for this skill. Although we crafted a solid mini-campaign, I feel like I fell short of developing the types of relationships needed to create real champions for the work. We also were not able to widen our coalition beyond those I had interviewed or those we had identified to connect with before the USP presentation. Part of the difficulty associated with creating and sustaining a coalition was the absence of a network, advisory, or method to bring together the coalition. As I mentioned, my absence on formal working teams tied to grantmaking and my inability to lead my own K-12/PS transitions team isolated me from regular interactions with those who may have formed a guiding coalition. Also, the initial communication that I was sending out as a part of my weekly email to the greater USPAC team with updates on my work began to stall as I found my work becoming more research-oriented and less worthy of formal communication. For these reasons, I believe that I was unable to create the strong support of a guiding coalition that could move the work forward in my absence.

This may be a key data point when evaluating whether a resident in a 10-month project is the right person to lead a project that requires ongoing systemic change intended to break down silos. Although, I tried to keep the project small enough in order to minimize disruption, I was never able to generate the required support from program leadership that is necessary to drive change.

Developing and Implementing Ideas

The lack of a decision to expand the K-12/PS transitions portfolio left the strategic project in a state of limbo ending at phase 2 of Kanter's skills for leading change. Previous efforts to designate a body of K-12/PS work within the foundation have also ended at the end of stage 2. My original inclination had been to create a cross-divisional work team to co-design the recommendations and advocate for the work. However, I was informed that the design of a new K-12/PS transitions strategy was a pre-requisite for gathering support from leadership to lead such an effort. Although I have seen other ad hoc teams at the foundation develop to address new areas of work, they often fall within the existing strategies and receive the blessing of leadership. The K-12/PS transitions portfolio adds an additional set of complexities because the resistance to change concerns new ways of doing the work (Kanter, 2012). There are large levels of uncertainty, a potential loss of resources, a belief that this creates more work, past resentments, and real threats to disrupting the status quo. This may have been the reason we were informed by USP leadership to only focus on the strategic investment elements of our recommendations and not the internal organizational structures necessary to support the work. Even when we

presented to the Extended Leadership Team, the focus of the conversation remained on investments rather than how the organization should organize to support the work. Whether or not this is the case, I believe the difference with this effort is the support of the President's office. There may be a long-term plan to garner support for this work before the foundation can move forward towards creating explicit structures for cross-division collaboration. Keeping this in mind, we also worked to frame the K-12/PS transitions framework as entry point for learning how to collaborate more effectively around a set of high school to postsecondary transitions investments that could lead to an eventual P-16 approach.

Results of the Project

Originally I developed three phases of the work that encapsulated the change process and devised two separate theories of action that I believed would catalyze the organization to take action in the K-12/PS transitions arena. The first theory of action focused on the external strategy and set of grantmaking activities that would create educational outcomes for students transitioning from K-12 to postsecondary. The second theory of action was aimed at process for creating the credibility, buy-in, and influence necessary for change.

After analyzing the major components of influence and change both externally and internally, I have modified my original theory of action. Originally, I believed that if I executed both theories of action I would have the evidence, strategy, and support needed for the foundation to authorize a new body of K-12/PS transitions work. However, throughout the course of my time at the foundation I found out that leading a change effort – especially one that falls outside of the boundaries of traditional silos – needs a more concerted effort to build influence for change. Therefore, my new theory of change encapsulates Kanter's 7 Skills of Change Masters, and my own personal experience of how to engage, create, inspire, communicate, and bring others along to a new a body of work focused on K-12/PS transitions within the context of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

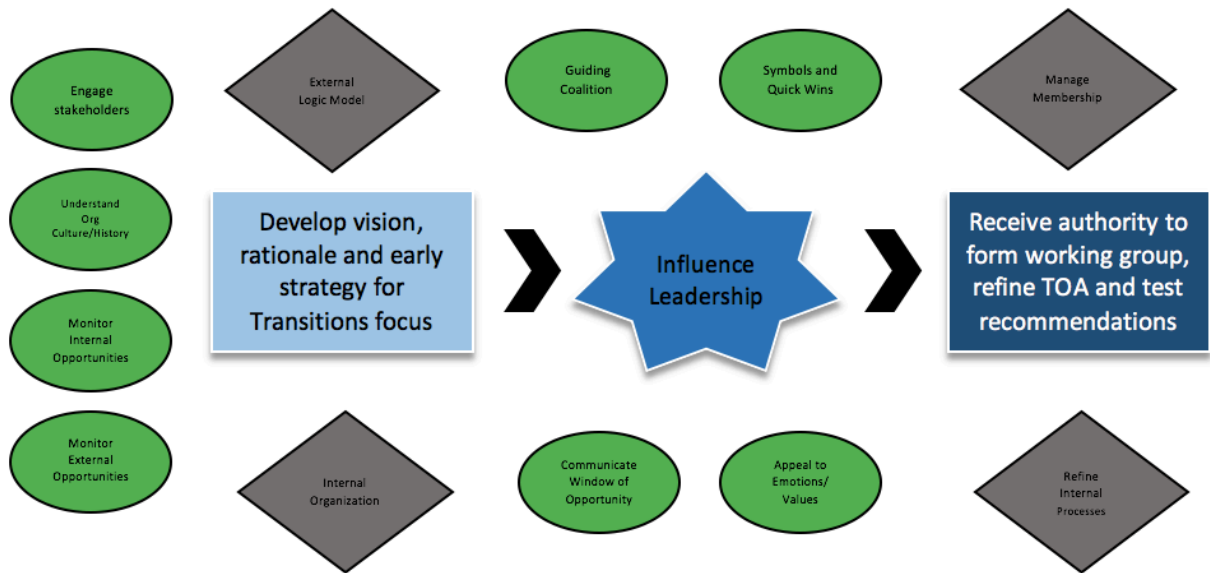


Figure 14. Modified Theory of Change

Even with the development of a new theory of action intended to build additional influence for change, I believe timing, and my level of authority played a major role in the outcome of the project. Although I believe I should have treated the change management process as cyclical instead of linear by continually “tuning into the environment”, revising my approach, and communicating that to leadership, the major disruptions happening during the time of my residency were nearly impossible to overcome. During my residency, instability and change were occurring at the leadership level, while the passage of ESSA created another major (unexpected) disruption to the organization. The type of change I was calling for (breaking down silos) would have been unique and difficult even in a time of stability. As a result of the turmoil, my project was seen as less important, considering the challenges that were at hand. Although I believe I could have done more to revise my approach as developments were occurring, I am not sure that building additional influence – as a resident – could

have overcome the major disruptions to the organization. Therefore, I could attribute the failure of the project to take hold as a result of bad timing or being too big of a task for a resident to lead (both of which I believe to be true). In the end, I believe there were two main forces that the project could not overcome:

- A new body of work (especially as complex as breaking down silos) was not going to be established without the new CR director in place.
- Reacting to the passage of ESSA became the core focus of the USP and USPAC leadership.

Although the particular context of the residency stagnated my strategic project, it is my belief that the foundation can move forward with this work by 1) Receiving authority from USP leadership, 2) Analyzing their own internal structures to support the K-12/ PS transitions work, and 3) Creating greater divisional collaboration as a method to develop effective K-12/ PS transition grants. The will of leadership drives work within the foundation. Subsequently, it is vital for the foundation's leadership to see K-12/ PS transitions as an integral strategy necessary to prepare all students for postsecondary success. Until the leadership – Bill and Melinda Gates, Allan Golston, and various directors and deputy directors – actively recognize and advocate for a K-12/ PS transitions focus, it will always be deprioritized. Furthermore, new internal organizational approaches that bring together both divisions within the foundation must be given the opportunity to develop. This is even more important as states increasingly view their education system as one seamless P-16 or P-20 system. As the foundation supports statewide efforts across the P-16 spectrum in key focus states, new methods of coordination, collaboration, alignment and innovation

will become necessary to create the systemic impact the foundation hopes to achieve. Yet, until the internal authority, capacity and structures are put in place, the K-12/PS transitions work will continue to cycle between stage 1 (generating ideas) and 2 (selling ideas) of change.

Implications for Self

Authentic Leadership

Throughout the course of my residency experience I found myself reflecting a great deal about my ability to be authentic, genuine, and even vulnerable – particularly in an organization that values technical knowledge. Being a strong leader requires more than a high level of technical expertise and management ability. Authentic leadership brings together a combination of values, skills sets, vision, and purpose (George, 2010). As I have mentioned, my role as a resident resembled that of a consultant weaving together information and strategy for the foundation’s review. I knew this would be a test for my own leadership growth, as I have often valued technical competency over relationship building and vulnerability.

Although my ability to lead was somewhat limited because of my partial authority to do so, I believe I was able to demonstrate a more authentic version of leadership than I have in the past. I credit much of this to my check-ins with my supervisor, who continually helped me reflect about our vision, our strategy, managing relationships, communicating with others, and my own personal growth. Throughout the two phases of change, I worked to balance our efforts with content knowledge grounded in a strong set of values. I also found myself revealing more about my personal story and sharing my personal opinions on matters more than I have in the past. In my previous roles, I may have kept my opinions to myself in order to avoid taking risks. I agree that “different contexts call for different leadership strategies” (Williams, 2005). In the residency setting I was able to use a technical-oriented version of leadership in combination with

values-based vision setting. My own personal preference is to lead through a coaching-oriented style that provides high autonomy with strong support and an emphasis on professional and personal growth. This plays well to my previous business and counseling experience. In the future I will continue to reflect on my ability to demonstrate “authentic leadership”, and how my role as a leader will impact the organization’s ability to have a high level of authenticity, vulnerability, and trust that motivates people to flourish through change.

Relationship Building

In my leadership journey, I reflect on the importance of relationship building and my own ability to display vulnerability. This was a large portion of my personal development as part of the Ed.L.D. adult development content arch. I often refer to my personal preference for technical expertise and results. As an INTJ on my Myers Briggs Type Indicator, I have a very logic-centered orientation to the world. The Myers Briggs is an assessment that proposes a psychological typology that indicates individuals’ preferences for how they focus their attention, perceive or take in information, prefer to make decisions and orient themselves to the external world. In my last professional role, I was the first director of a start-up organization within a small state agency. My job was to create a vision for the organization and determine strategies and objectives to make this vision a reality. In my 360 leadership feedback, it was apparent that my intuitive nature helped me flourish in this role. Many of the comments regarding my ability to create a strong vision for the organization and to see things beyond the scope of the present were tremendously positive. I believe that

is one of my strengths – to move past the day-to-day facts of the grant proposal or the deliverables and say, “What are we really trying to create and what is the best way to do that?” This can also make me seem more dismissive of the small details, especially when it comes to day-to-day details or creating and maintaining authentic relationships. My experience with my workplace lab team in the Ed.L.D. program helped me consider the process of leadership rather than solely focusing on results and outcomes. I have learned that relationships are about taking the time to invest in the lives of others and to care about the small details that ensure others feel validated, heard, and respected. I have also learned that this creates higher levels of trust, buy-in, and openness that are crucial to garnering support and cohesion when leading.

Throughout my time at the foundation, I found that developing new relationships across divisions and among leadership was an essential part of gathering feedback and support for the project. Part of this process required me to tell my personal story and, in doing so, I felt comfortable revealing more about my personal journey than I would have in the past. This was important because the personal narrative developing for me at the foundation was that of “Harvard doctoral resident”. I felt comfortable sharing that I began my postsecondary experience in community college and was raised by a single mother when it became necessary to do so. This was also important because in the past I may have seen this as revealing my inadequacies or seeing this as time wasting and unproductive. When I was in the business world I rarely saw displays of vulnerability and fashioned my early leadership style around what I thought was necessary to be an effective and productive employee. One of my fears was that the foundation would reinforce my old leadership style and stifle my ability

create more authentic relationships. Yet, I found foundation officers and leaders speaking to their passions and communicating their values, while also being results-oriented. In some ways, it was a more powerful learning experience to be exposed to an environment that values both results and relationships. Although the foundation may always sway more towards logic over values, I believe there is room to display vulnerability and still be successful in delivering results. Indeed, I believe my willingness to be transparent gave me another level of credibility and helped me establish deeper relationships than I may have in the past. Yet, I am aware that this will always be a work in progress.

Supervision and Mentoring

As a resident I had limited authority and ability to lead change in the organization; therefore, it was necessary to exercise leadership without formal authority. My supervisor and mentor were essential to the success of my project. Being a resident somehow made it both easier and more difficult to take risks. Being an outsider allowed me a certain level of flexibility when it came to making recommendations and pushing the envelope of what the foundation has done in the past. On the other hand, being a resident – and potential future employee – creates a level of risk-aversion that can stifle the change management process. Bearing in mind those two competing priorities, having two internal sponsors (supervisor/mentor) created a level of political cover, enhanced my credibility and provided influence that I could not have garnered on my own. There were times when we selectively chose to nudge leadership, communicate the progress of the effort or make an official request of leadership. It was also important to have supporters at every level of the organization that could

provide assistance when necessary. My supervisor was a senior program officer in College Ready and my mentor was a deputy director in the Postsecondary division. This allowed us to gain traction throughout the organization. Nearly every “one-on-one” meeting with my supervisor and mentor ended with them asking me the phrase “What can I do to be helpful to you?” I also found this to be the case when I spoke with the director of USPAC. I believe this is an incredibly important trait of leadership that I will take with me going forward. Leaders understand that a key component to the success of their employees is removing roadblocks and barriers that may come their way (Kotter, 2014). As a leader I see how it will be important to regularly identify challenges with my direct reports and to strategize ways that I can support their success.

My Place in the Sector

Philanthropy is a major influencer of education reform in the United States. Yet, I would hear people in the foundation state, “We don’t actually do anything, we fund people to do things.” In some respects, this is true. However, I saw program officers working closely with grantees to co-develop new ideas and concepts that will undoubtedly impact practice on the ground. Historically, many program officers have chosen to leave BMGF after several years, desiring to be closer to practice-oriented work in the field. When I left the business world to become an educator I never had the desire to remain a counselor forever. In fact, I found it incredibly unfulfilling to only serve a small number of students when so many schools were failing across the country. I sought to work for the state because I desired to reach a greater number of students. Eventually, I

yearned to address the entire system and structure of education in the United States, in order to have the largest impact possible. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided me with just that opportunity to address education reform at the system level. More so, the foundation was a great outlet for me to find the balance between my motivations and capabilities. I left the business sector to ensure a greater number of underrepresented students, with backgrounds very similar to my own, had professional opportunities that would lead to greater economic and social mobility. This is a driving value of the foundation and I found the organization to be a great fit with my “purpose” of education. I also found the foundation to be a place where making connections and establishing relationships with existing and potential grantees are essential to the work. This also plays well to my strengths as a natural collaborator and connector. Bill George, author of *True North: Discovering your Authentic Leadership*, refers to the alignment of your motivations with your strongest capabilities as your *sweet spot* for leadership. This will be an important aspect of identifying a role moving forward that maximizes my effectiveness as leader.

Implications for Site

Address Barriers to Innovation

Data-Driven Vs. Agility

Large organizations often create a host of processes and systems that are intended for greater efficiencies and effectiveness, but can also stifle the agility and flexibility needed to take advantage of new windows of opportunity. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is merely 15 years old, which makes them relatively young as an organization. The addition of Warren Buffet's donation in 2006 immediately made the foundation the largest in the world. That being said, the organization has had to grow relatively quickly. Imagine how this impacts an organization that has to quickly develop new processes for hiring, employee benefits, grantmaking, data management, IT, finance, and support staff across the major program areas of global development, global health, and U.S. education. At the time of Buffet's donation, previous efforts of the foundation's U.S. Program (small schools, Annenberg Challenge, etc.) were found to have mixed success and received considerable scrutiny from the education community at large. The notion that many of these efforts had scaled too quickly without a strong enough "proof of concept", in combination with the additional growth of the organization, fueled a new era of grantmaking that began in 2008 with the arrival of Vicki Phillips. This led to a new theory of action in the College Ready division (the largest of both divisions), a tight focus on strategy related to teacher effectiveness, and new ways of measuring the impact of grantmaking activities.

The evolution of this more strategic approach has also created a host of new processes, hierarchies, and thresholds for results-oriented approaches that

can work against innovation. In a sense it has made the organization more risk-averse and beholden to data as a key driver of decision making. This is not necessarily a disadvantage considering the size of many grants. Large mistakes in the grantmaking arena can damage the foundation's credibility and potential impact across the sector. By the same token, an overreliance on data and hierarchical chains of command and processes can stifle new innovations that have yet to be tested or conceptualized. This is also true of organizations that can not easily meet the operational and financial thresholds required by the foundation to receive funding. This is often a criticism of the foundation that negatively impacts their ability to fund organizations led by people of color. Although the foundation would like to seed more of these organizations, their internally imposed systems do not allow for the flexibility to fund many of these organizations if they do not meet a strict criteria created by the foundation. This may call for a "do no harm" approach aimed at providing more capacity-building grants over project based grants with tight requirements for outcomes. In my own project, I was hampered by the budgets and grantmaking timelines that created an artificial window to present the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. A philanthropic organization as large as the Gates Foundation should consider the internally imposed timelines and systems that constrain their ability to be flexible and agile as an innovator in the sector.

Ambidexterity

Though the organization is data-driven and risk-averse, I still believe there is room for the foundation to seek new innovations that will transform the system to meet the needs of the 21st century learner. The foundation currently

invests in innovative approaches that seek to incrementally improve the often ineffective and antiquated system that is currently in place. An ambidextrous approach would allow the foundation to work on both fronts, “improvement” and “innovation”. Harvard Business School professor Michael Tushman (2012) calls companies that pursue breakthrough growth by separating *exploratory* units from traditional, *exploitive* ones while maintaining tight links across units as “Ambidextrous Organizations”. This will call for new mechanisms that allow the foundation to be agile, innovative, and open to risk-taking. If the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation cannot take risks in the public sector, then who can? One approach may be a new set of innovation-oriented grants that have flexibility outside the existing grantmaking structures. Similar to for-profit organizations that have autonomous divisions developing or acquiring innovative products and ideas, the foundation can begin thinking about pursuing the type of education system that meets the learning needs of students in the 21st century.

Currently, innovative solutions within the foundation, such as personalized learning grants, are aimed at improving traditional *exploitive* units – teacher effectiveness – without *exploring* new ways to propel learning that may fundamentally change the role of instruction and the teacher. Imagine if new systems, partnerships, and institutional designs created new learning environments capable of providing real-world learning experiences, anytime learning, and blended secondary and postsecondary models. Pushing true innovation in an exploratory manner would allow new opportunities to be developed and tested with a “lean startup” mentality as opposed to a traditional, research – proof of concept – scale, approach. This may require the foundation to publicly state that they are seeking new innovative approaches that potentially

reconfigure learning environments to meet the needs of all students. This will have to be communicated in a manner that does not bring new scrutiny on the former “small schools” focus that is often held up by the public as a foundation misstep. An ambidextrous configuration would allow for innovative approaches, such as the K-12/PS transitions portfolio to be tested, refined, and held up as a new transformative design.

Reflect the Collaboration Desired in the Field

Reductionist vs. Synergistic

In order to create a more cohesive and effective education system, the work of the foundation should be to develop the type of collaborative partnerships within the organization that they desire between systems in the field. One senior program officer told me in our interview, “The reductionist nature of our efforts does not allow us to see the bigger picture across divisions.” As stated previously, large organizations often create silos to capture greater efficiencies and effectiveness. Indeed, this may prove to work well within silos, but does not necessarily capture synergies across silos. This is also true of the education sector in the U.S. and is reflected in the organizational composition of the foundation. Silo-oriented activities also create no space for collaboration across divisions that could potentially lead to greater overall impact. A synergistic approach may call for a student-focused orientation over a solutions and institutions configuration. The foundation should consider a new cross-functional group that connects the different divisions or a new P-16 reconfiguration that cuts across divisions and focuses on the needs of the

student.

Collaboration Requirements

A new portfolio of investments shared between the College Ready and Postsecondary divisions may be an entry point for creating synergies across every division of the U.S. Program. This can only be accomplished by receiving authority and capacity from leadership to begin learning how divisions can collaborate in an explicit manner. The K-12/PS transitions vision has been clarified and the investment recommendations provide a scope of work and theory of action that both divisions can unite around. Yet, in order to do so, internal organization elements must be in place that create greater transparency, communication, and methods for co-developed grants. When speaking to program officers and leaders throughout the organization, many interviewees spoke to the lack of accountability and ownership for the K-12/PS transitions work. At BMGF, it is essential that the full USP leadership gets on board and supports the K-12/PS transitions portfolio. It was telling that the leaders in the ELT presentation only wanted to focus on the technical components of grant-related interventions and solutions, instead of the how the work should be organized internally to support greater connections and collaboration. Innovations can be seen as threats to existing authority, budgeting allocations, and capacity requirements, or otherwise. Work that is shared across divisions or that is outside of the existing strategy can often find itself homeless. Consequently, new mechanisms for communicating across teams, developing an accountability structure, devising a grantmaking process, creating a budget, and measuring success in this arena are necessary if the K-12/PS transitions portfolio

is ever to develop. The next steps to creating greater collaboration across divisions are twofold:

1. Establish Student K-12/PS Transitions/ Alignment as a Key Strategic Priority
 - a. Provide visible support and communication from leadership
 - b. Develop a common definition across teams and shared vision for the K-12/PS transitions work
2. Develop the Requisite Infrastructure for the K-12/PS Transitions Portfolio
 - a. Ensure high visibility, transparency, communication and inclusiveness
 - b. Develop procedures, milestones and feedback loops
 - c. Identify internal organizational structure for K-12/PS transitions grants

An executive sponsor or group of sponsors may be necessary to elevate this as a new strategic focus that aligns and strengthens existing strategies. A working group comprised of key stakeholders across the foundation can develop a structure for cross-division collaboration and grantmaking activities. This group can build on the recommendations and research gathered as part of the Ed.L.D. strategic project to create a shared set of procedures and grantmaking activities. Just as it is important to create collaborations that go beyond coordination in the field, it is also important to create collaborations within the foundation that co-design, co-develop and co-implement the work. Simply relying on the recommendations of the strategic project may not create the required buy-in and empowerment necessary to drive a shared K-12/PS transitions venture.

Moreover, the field does not recognize the foundation as two separate divisions of work, they view the organization's work as unified and coordinated. Grantees may have the expectation that the foundation has clear lines of communication and internal processes for coordinating grantmaking efforts.

Thus, it is important to begin developing the internal systems to reflect a more organized approach. It is vital that leadership comes together to show support for the K-12/PS transitions portfolio and to motivate program officers to work collaboratively towards strengthening the entire education pipeline.

Entry Point for Learning

The K-12/PS transitions portfolio provides a learning space to understand how divisions can coordinate and collaborate more effectively. With the advent of an early learning focus, the foundation now has the entire P-16 pipeline represented. This raises the question, “How is the foundation creating synergies across the pipeline?” As the number of investments grow across the pipeline and all three divisions (Pre-K, College Ready, Postsecondary) show up in a state, there will come a time when all members of the organization must understand how to coordinate across all divisions and think of the work as a P-16 effort. This supports the notion that a new student-focused orientation can cut across traditional K-12 and postsecondary boundaries. Subsequently, the K-12/PS transitions project can potentially be a place where both K-12 and PS divisions learn how to co-create goals, grants, and collaborative designs that can inform the foundation’s work moving forward. Accordingly, the right types of conditions would have to be in place in order to drive change and collaboration in the foundation.

Implications for Sector

Systemic Education Reform

Educator Knowledge

In my professional career I have been fortunate to work across most of the education and workforce pipeline. Based on that experience, I am convinced that education reform in the United States must be thought of in a P-16 or P-20 fashion if we are in agreement that students will require some form of postsecondary credential in order to acquire the skills sets necessary to be productive workers and citizens. The pre-school, elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and workforce systems are both independent and interdependent, relying on the success of one another to meet the ultimate objective for students. If this is indeed the case, then it is no longer suitable for these systems of education to operate in isolation of each other.

Today educators have very little understanding of the education systems outside of their own that directly impact the eventual success of their students. This is partly because systems are held accountable for results within their own domains. A new P-16 approach calls for educators to have cross-functional training and boundary spanning skills that allows them to see how their work is interconnected. This can also open up new lines of communication and potential collaboration for co-curricular design or the design of new learning environments and policy solutions.

Educators in both sectors must see this work as a shared responsibility and advocate for its importance to student outcomes. Local K-12 accountability structures that have been reinforced by federal accountability policies are

primarily tied to academic achievement, as measured by standardized tests, and high school graduation rates. On the other hand, postsecondary institutions operate in a semi-autonomous fashion with limited accountability tied to student performance – although many states are legislating performance-based funding. Rarely do K-12 and postsecondary leaders collaborate to design new systems of learning, alignment, or shared collaboration. There is little incentive to do so, and only proactive institutions seem to be moving forward on this front. Educators that are cross-trained to understand the entirety of the system can see the importance of college and career readiness and postsecondary planning as a shared responsibility that will benefit their students and institutions in the long-run. Together these K-12 and postsecondary educators can push for new incentives that bring together both systems.

Lack of Incentives

In the absence of incentives, the responsibility of creating connections and alignment is then left to the state-level, where P-16 and P-20 efforts have had mixed results at best. Consequently, efforts aimed at alignment are removed from their relevance to instruction, implementation, assessment, and learning. What if K-12 and postsecondary systems came together to support work-based learning in high school, project-based portfolios for students, and college entrance requirements that were in alignment? What if the lines between high school and postsecondary became blurred because of competency-based education, dual-credit, and affordable postsecondary options? These are just two examples of collaborative designs that have the potential to increase college readiness, expand college access, increase college affordability, and reduce time

to degree.

In order to create the right types of incentives and structures that will lead to a more integrated and seamless system, state-level leadership must create the right types of enabling conditions that support collaborative institutional designs that deliver new solutions for students. States see the P-16 pipeline in its entirety and are motivated to increase degree credential attainment as an economic development strategy. Additionally, new cross-sector collaborations may eventually be more commonplace as the new “Every Student Succeeds Act” drives greater authority to the states for education. Since states are eager to increase the number of college graduates within their state, some may devise new accountability mechanisms to incentivize greater measures of college readiness such as dual enrollment, college acceptance rates, or FAFSA completion. Philanthropy can capitalize on this window of opportunity by supporting new models that enhance system collaboration and policy alignment. Subsequently, states may begin to support new designs that begin to blend K-12 and postsecondary learning systems.

Philanthropy’s Role in Supporting System Collaboration and Alignment

Convening Power

Philanthropy plays a critical role in the development, spread, and scale of new education reforms and endeavors across the country. The results of these efforts have seen a number of successes and failures over the years. However, one cannot deny the convening power of foundations that often lead to new ideas and new collaborative partnerships. This may be the point of leverage where foundations can have the most impact when looking to create greater

system alignment. As Hal Lawson stated, “third-generation partnerships” require knowledge generation developed to continuously improve public policy, educational practice and their relations, and to seek new institutional designs.

Both K-12 and postsecondary systems need a foundational set of principles that can guide the development, implementation, and sustainability of interventions and policy that meet the needs of their individual communities. These principles can provide a framework and plan for cross-sector organization, yet allow enough flexibility for autonomy and customization. Finally, foundations that are involved in the practice and policy components of reform can maximize their impact by working with system leaders to develop cross-sector collaborations that will be most effective for their students. Foundations can support the technical assistance elements necessary to provide support and also connect efforts across states for shared learning.

Research and Information

Philanthropy can support the research and information necessary for practitioners, education leaders, and policymakers to make informed decisions about interventions and policy levers that are contextually appropriate. There is a dearth of literature regarding the interventions that impact K-12/PS transitions for students. Practitioners and policymakers should be able to understand the cost-benefit and quality of research associated with multiple interventions and models in this arena. Funding research and information that allow leaders to make a number of decisions based on quality data may be difficult for foundations that have specific theories of action around a set of interventions or policies that they believe will lead to improved outcomes for students, yet in any

case, a negotiation between the grantor and grantee around a shared vision must take place. For example, some local partnerships or states may want to move forward with dual enrollment, while others may want to improve school counseling at scale. School counseling reform may not be a core strategy of the foundation, however, this may be a compromise that gets made in lieu of informed decision making leading to greater sector collaboration.

Philanthropic Partnerships

Finally, partnerships among philanthropic entities will undoubtedly be necessary to drive greater collaboration across sectors at scale. This may require a greater partnership or network to develop among foundations focused on cross-sector alignment and student K-12/postsecondary transitions. A philanthropic entity as large as the Gates Foundation can play a leading role in this endeavor, considering the connections and infrastructure they have already built around Common Core implementation and developmental education reform.

Philanthropic partnerships are essential for tapping into existing local networks, building from previous efforts and navigating the complexity of the local context. Partnerships between national foundations and local foundations will be essential to scaling cross-sector collaboration that require high amounts of coordination and connection between local K-12 and higher education systems.

Conclusion

After 5 years in the business world I found myself as the lone school counselor in a Title 1 middle school. I did not know much about the field of education, but I soon learned what it meant to be a 100 percent free and reduced-price lunch school. It meant that students faced a constant barrage of barriers on a daily basis. My goal was to show students how to navigate the treacherous terrain and more importantly inspire them to set high expectations for their futures. As a school counselor I constantly strove to make our school a college-going campus. It was not lost upon me that students needed more than academic preparation; they needed the skill sets, opportunities, and belief systems that would allow them to make progress towards obtaining a college degree. As a result, I launched my own afterschool academy focused on college access and leadership, created intramural sports teams with only college names, partnered with the local colleges to conduct parent education workshops, and began teaching a college success strategies course at the local community college. Ironically, I was teaching a college course at the community college where I had begun my own postsecondary career. On a daily basis I could see the education pipeline, students in 5th grade struggling with math, who as college freshmen were placed into remedial courses. I could also see students without the study skills, financial capabilities, or the advocates to help them persevere and flourish in the postsecondary system. As a school counselor I felt that I was not doing enough and failing to make a big enough impact, so I sought a position with the state.

At the state level, it was easier to see the structural and policy barriers contributing to the breakdowns in the education pipeline. Underfunded and

under-resourced schools, social promotion, lack of high expectations, lack of college opportunities, high school and postsecondary graduation misalignment, and postsecondary affordability concerns, among others, created barriers that were often too large for underrepresented students and families to surmount. At the state I worked to create a network of programs, organizations, schools, and associations who collectively worked to provide college access and transitions supports to students. In my state agency (The Arizona Commission of Postsecondary Education) we provided state-based aid and developed policy solutions aimed at college enrollment, postsecondary affordability, and college completion. Nevertheless, many schools and districts were not preparing students academically, providing them with opportunities to earn dual credit, exposing them to a college campus, or connecting them with examples of college graduates that reflected themselves. Connections between high schools and postsecondary institutions should be the minimum standard of collaboration that can provide students with these types of experiences. Moreover, innovation is taking place in both K-12 and higher education that promises personalized pathways, learning experiences, and the potential for competency-based education that can improve affordability and time to degree. The great opportunity to conceptualize the education pipeline as an integrated system that provides high-quality postsecondary opportunities for all students was the focus of my strategic project at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. My goal was to show the foundation an entry point of where to begin working towards that vision.

From the outset I had a very clear understanding of my strategic project. My director, supervisor, and members of the K-12/PS transitions team allowed

me to take the lead on the project and supported my efforts throughout the project. I found many program officers and leaders within the foundation to be extremely talented and supportive of greater alignment and connections both in the field and within the foundation. Many provided unique and valuable insight that pushed our thinking and allowed us to frame the work in a manner that would be most convincing to leadership. We were able to get our ideas in front of the Extended Leadership Team and advocate for a greater vision of an aligned education system. I believe we executed on the first two stages of change as best as we could with the information and resources we had at the time. A major transition in leadership and the passage of ESSA created a vacuum of energy that dampened any new activities, especially those pushing the boundaries of the existing strategy. Although we were not successful operationalizing the K-12/PS transitions portfolio, there are elements of the work that have appeared in other facets of the foundation's work. A special task force was created to answer core questions concerning the state of aligned high school and college placements, especially related to the foundation's current investments in Common Core assessments, and self-assessment tool providers. Further, the President's office was reorganized to deliver division-wide support for cross-cutting initiatives, create greater alignment across strategic priorities, and to build an understanding of progress and learning across the U.S. Program. Finally, career-based pathways from high school through postsecondary were a focal point of a special task force examining achievement gap closing strategies. Of course, the K-12/postsecondary transitions project cannot fully take credit for any of this work; however, I believe it may have provided an additional data point for change that was already underway.

My time at the foundation tested my ability to lead with informal authority and navigate the culture of a data-driven and process-oriented organization. I strove to find a balance between the technical and cultural. The truth of the matter is that many directors, deputy directors, and program officers care about student transitions and greater alignment between both divisions of the work, yet are busy executing their day-to-day responsibilities. Several program officers spoke to the lack of accountability as the crux of the program. Trying to navigate the dynamics of leadership, divisional differences, work processes, and budgeting among others was a difficult task for a resident. My goal was to inspire others, create a vision, and develop an internal plan to improve the successful transition of students across the education pipeline, leading to a postsecondary credential with value. Although I am unsure as to whether a resident could have ever been successful leading this type of major effort, my hope is that the K-12/PS transitions will continue to resonate with the organization as a meaningful scope of work in the education sector in which they will eventually engage.

The residency experience has been incredibly valuable as a growth opportunity and even more so as opportunity to learn from some of the most influential leaders in the education sector. I have been incredibly grateful for my opportunity to be included in strategy discussions, investment meetings, convenings, professional development opportunities, and more importantly to feel like part of the family. I have had the opportunity to think about the sector in a systemic fashion and have had the opportunity to play a small part in creating change. This type of opportunity was the reason I left the state of Arizona to pursue a degree in the Ed.L.D. program. I have found the opportunity to think

about the system broadly, especially at the policy level, as the type of work that invigorates me the most as I move forward in my career. As I complete this capstone and stride forward to the next phase in my career, I hope to continue working towards a more equitable and high-performing system that allows every student to reach his or her full potential.

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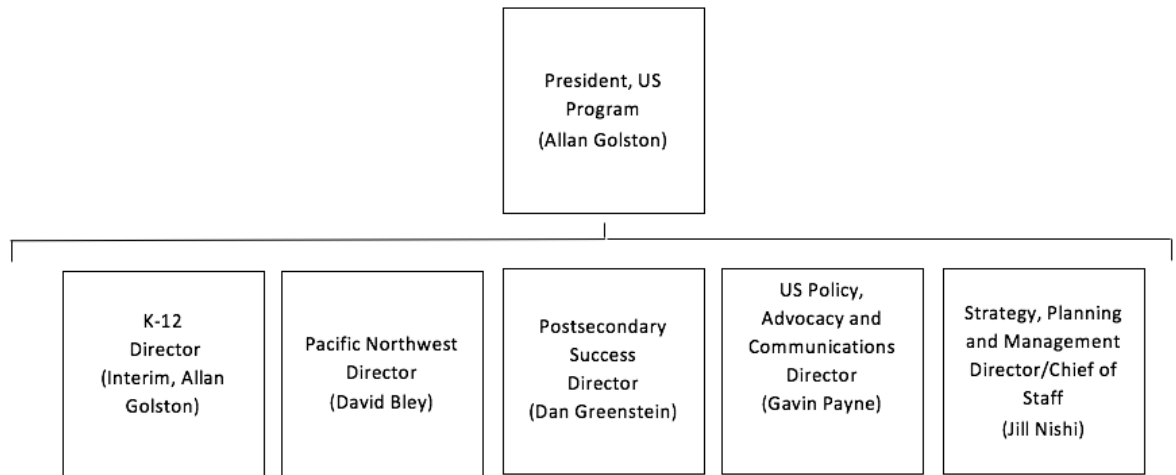
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Appendices

Appendix A U.S. Program Organizational Chart



Appendix B Internal and External Interviews

Internal Interviews

	Name	TEAM CR/PS	Position	Date Completed	Notes
Round 1	Gaby Gomez	PS - USPAC	Deputy Director	6/26/2015	Complete
	Yvonne Belanger	PS	RME	7/6/2015	Complete
	Sidney Hacker	PS - USPAC	SPO	7/9/2015	Complete
	Bill Tucker	CR	Senior Advisor	7/17/2015	Complete
	Adam Tucker	CR - Go Far	SPO	8/6/2015	Complete
	Ed Pacchetti	USPAC	Fellow	8/7/2015	Complete
	Ken Thompson	PNW	SPO	8/12/2015	Complete
	Jamie McKee	CR	SPO	8/13/2015	Complete
	Lindsay Hunsicker	USPAC	Chief of Staff	8/13/2015	Complete
	Paul Markham	PS	SPO	8/13/2015	Complete
	Nick Lee	PS - USPAC	SPO	8/17/2015	Complete
	Rae Ann Knopf	CR - USPAC	Deputy Director	8/21/2015	Complete
	Ash Vasudeva	CR - Go Big	SPO	8/26/2015	Complete
	Jill Nishi	US Program	Director SPM	9/23/2015	Complete
	Amy Slamp	CR	SPO	10/13/2015	Complete
Round 2	Gavin Payne	USPAC	Director	8/24/2015	Complete
	Irvin Scott	CR - Go Big	Deputy Director	9/3/2015	Complete
	Jen Bluestein	USPAC - CC	Deputy Director	9/10/2015	Complete
	Raul Gonzalez	USPAC - CC	SPO	9/10/2015	Complete
Additions	Ann Martens	PNW	PO	9/3/2015	Complete
	Brad Burnatek	CR - Go Bold	SPO	9/4/2015	Complete
	Eli Prostoop	CR - Go Big	PO	9/8/2015	Complete
	John Fischer	CR- USPAC	SPO	9/9/2015	Complete
	Greg Ratliff	PS	SPO	11/5/2015	Complete
	Jen Engle	PS	SPO	12/10/2015	Complete

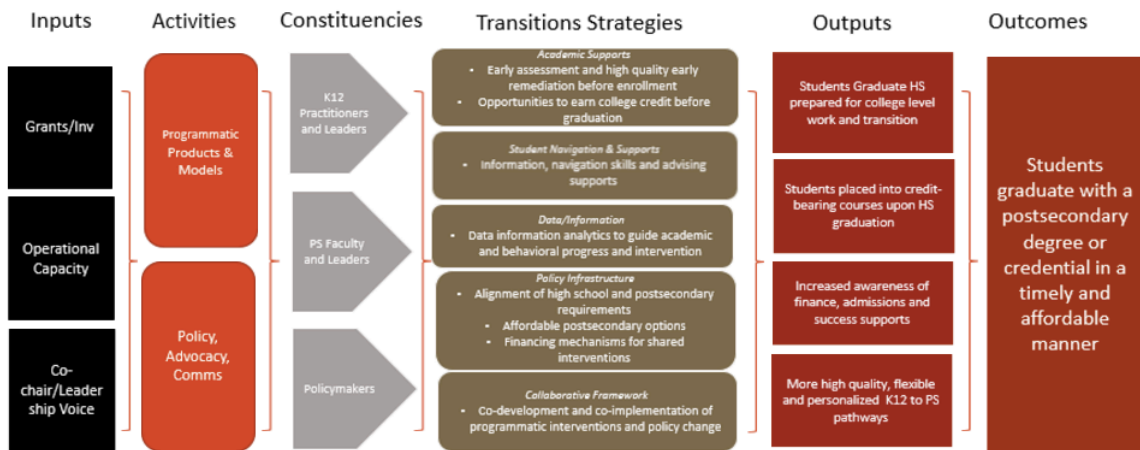
External Interviews

Name	Organization	Title	Date Completed	Notes
Joel Vargas	Jobs for the Future	Vice President	7/10/2015	Complete
Carrie Warrick	National College Access Network	Director of Partnerships and Policy	8/3/2015	Complete
Sara Melnick	National College Access Network	Deputy Director	8/3/2015	Complete
Ed Pacchetti	U.S. Department of Education	Deputy Director, Program Oversight Staff	8/5/2015	Complete
Brian Sponsler	Education Commission for the States	Director, Postsecondary and Workforce	8/14/2015	Complete
Angela Boatman	Assistant Professor	Vanderbilt University	11/11/2015	Complete
Madeline Trimble	Community College Research Center	Data Analyst	11/11/2015	Complete
Lara Pheatt	Community College Research Center	Research Associate	11/11/2015	Complete
John Fitzpatrick	Educate Texas	Executive Director	11/30/2015	Complete
Priscilla Aquino Garza	Educate Texas	Associate Program Officer, Policy and Advocacy	11/30/2015	Complete
Ben Castleman	Assistant Professor	University of Virginia	11/30/2015	Complete
Carolyn Landel	The Charles A. Dana Center at UT Austin	Managing Director	1/1/16	Complete
Lindsay Tepe	New America Foundation	Policy Analyst	1/8/2016	Complete

Appendix C Student Challenges High School to Postsecondary

Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-rigorous Programs of Study in K-12• Unprepared for College-level Coursework• Increased Time to Degree in PS
Navigational (Informational/Social)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to Apply to College, Complete FAFSA and Scholarship Options• Career/major Indecision• Summer Melt, College Undermatch, Poor College Fit• Sense of Belonging, Ability to Overcome Setbacks, Stereotype Threat
Enabling Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Misplacement in Developmental Education• Insufficient Credits for College Admissions• Inability to Target Key Successful Programmatic Student Factors• Unaffordable Postsecondary Options

Appendix D Theory of Action/Logic Model for K-12/PS Transitions Portfolio



Appendix E K-12/Higher Education Alignment at the State Level

States Requiring College Entrance Exam in High School

State	College Entrance Exam
Alabama	ACT (May substitute w/ ACT Work keys)
Alaska	ACT or SAT (May substitute w/ ACT Work Keys)
Arkansas	ACT (District Optional)
Hawaii	ACT
Illinois	ACT (District Optional)
Kentucky	ACT
Louisiana	ACT
Michigan	ACT
Minnesota	ACT
Mississippi	ACT
Missouri	ACT
Montana	ACT
Nevada	ACT
North Carolina	ACT
North Dakota	ACT
Tennessee	ACT
Utah	ACT
Wisconsin	ACT
Wyoming	ACT
Colorado	ACT (Expected switch to SAT)
Delaware	SAT
District of Columbia	SAT
Idaho	SAT
Maine	SAT (Student and District Optional)

States with Aligned High School Assessments and Postsecondary Placement Policies

State	Assessment
Connecticut	Completion of HS ELA and Math curricula
Arkansas	PARCC
California	Smarter Balanced
Colorado	ACT, SAT, Compass, Accuplacer, PARCC, SBAC can all be used. State required SAT and PARCC
Delaware	Smarter Balanced
Florida	Policy exempting graduated state public high school students from requiring placement assessment. Students placed directly into college-level coursework.
Hawaii	Smarter Balanced
Illinois	PARCC
Kentucky	ACT
Missouri	Multiple Measures: Missouri Assessment Plan (MAP), SBAC, ACT, SAT, Compass, Accuplacer, Asset). State required ACT.
Oregon	Smarter Balanced
South Dakota	Smarter Balanced
Washington	Smarter Balanced

**5 States have partial alignment between high school and PS (Idaho, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Tennessee)*

**All data was received from New America: Atlas (Mapping College Ready Policies): Jan 5, 2016.*

Appendix F Shared Indicators of Success

**All indicators will be disaggregated by student demographics*

Overall
High School Graduation Rate
Postsecondary Enrollment: Proportion of high school graduates who enter postsecondary entry within 12 to 16 months
Degree Attainment: Out of 100 Students who commence 9 th grade, how many will earn an Associates or Bachelor's degree within 10 years

Academic
Percentage of high school students scoring at or above college readiness cut scores on both Math and ELA on PARCC or Smarter Balanced
Percentage of high school graduates enrolled in remedial courses upon transitioning to community college
Percentage of high school graduates with 15 credit hours of early college credit

Student Navigation
Percentage of high school graduates completing FAFSA
Of high school graduates who filed a FAFSA, and are PELL-eligible, percentage receiving PELL grant
Percentage of high school graduates submitting at least 5 postsecondary education applications
Percentage of students submitting at least 5 scholarship applications
Percentage of high school juniors with completed individualized plan for postsecondary education, careers and financial aid

Appendix G K-12/PS Transitions and Alignment Funders

K-12/Postsecondary (Policy/Research/System Structures) – Focused on structural alignment and change between sectors

Funder	Area of Cross-Over in the Transition Space
Kresge Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College admission, advising and supports secondary through postsecondary • Intermediary supports for Higher Education Institutions, CBO networks and research organizations focused on access and postsecondary success • Completion By Design • Student Success Centers
Lumina Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger Nation Report • Collective Impact Grants focused on Latino College Preparation, Access and Success • Reverse-transfer, credentials and certificates • Higher Education affordability and transparency • Institutional and Policy collaboration for higher education
Knowledge Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective Impact/Ecosystem Alignment • Early College High Schools
New Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Access and Success Funder Roundtable • College Advising, mentoring, programs • Teacher effectiveness, leadership, personalized learning, charter schools, wrap-around supports
USA Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on College Completion • Streamlining education transitions • Innovative approaches to college and career readiness • Frameworks for data-driven decision making for students, families, policymakers and educational institutions
Hewlett Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Gen learning Challenge • Deeper Learning in Common Core
Joyce Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling Pathways programs focused on college and career at both high schools and postsecondary institutions • Improving student transitions from secondary to postsecondary institutions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal success skills (non-cog, behavioral) • Improvement of teaching/learning (competency, games-based, project-based)
Spencer Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research - understanding factors that influence students' access to and through college

College Access/Success Funders – Student-level programming focused on college knowledge and social supports

Funder	Area of Cross-Over in the Transition Space
Bloomberg Philanthropies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Point- College Access and Success Initiative focused on near-peer college advising and postsecondary success
Michael and Susan Dell Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Preparation and Completion focus for low-income students • Academic, Non-cog/character, Financial access/affordability, wrap-around support
Heckscher Foundation for Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to postsecondary education and graduation for high potential, low-income students as a principle focus • Catalytic giving intended to scale: Ex. Single Stop Community College Initiative • Strategic partnerships for collaboration. Ex. iMentor, College Access and Success Initiative, TFA • Targeting texting pilots focused on Summer Melt
Stupksi Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on poor and minority students by supporting mentoring and coaching programs that are committed to college access and success and/or technical training or educational programs leading to a successful career launch

Appendix H ELT Follow-Up Memo to USPAC Leadership

K-12/PS TRANSITIONS PORTFOLIO UPDATE AND RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION

ELT Response and Next Steps

In response to the feedback we received from the Extended Leadership Team meeting earlier this year we have identified Transition zone data in key focus states, documented states with aligned high school assessment/college entrance/college placement policies, and developed an associative cost-benefit analysis of Transitions interventions at an aggregate level (Appendix A, B, C).⁸ We have also addressed the additional areas of feedback from the ELT, such as Transitions progress in the field, explicit research evidence for recommendations, incentives for dual enrollment, as well as social/emotional factors in the full portfolio. Taking into consideration the full range of possibilities in the Transitions arena, we believe it is important to lay out a next-step course of action that provides the most value to the foundation and the field in advancement of smoothing the transition from high school to postsecondary.

Phase 1: Work with USP directors to identify a Transitions lead and team members to form a cross-functional working group intended to provide strategic support to the development of the Transitions Zone portfolio.

Objectives: (3-6 months)

- Identify the correct indicators for segmented populations across the Transition Zone (transition course candidates, summer melt, under match, Pell eligible not completing FAFSA)
- Create criteria for *Cost-Benefit Analysis* to be used by education leaders and policymakers that includes multiple Transitions interventions (Developmental education models and scaling, student navigation and advising support, dual enrollment funding, etc.)
- Identify 3-4 key focus states to test and refine contextually appropriate models that include Transitions solutions
- Develop a method to ensure transparency, communication and inclusiveness across investments impacting CR and PS
- Develop recommendations for internal organization of Transition zone investments (governance, capacity, accountability, funding)

Phase 2: Operationalize activities established within phase 1. Ensure the Transitions portfolio receives USP-wide support, measures of accountability, and resources to expand the Transitions portfolio.

Objectives: (1-3 Years)

- Fund 3 to 4 states to undertake implementation efforts along elements of 12th-grade redesign co-cubed framework

⁸ Currently, cost-benefit analyses for Transition Zone interventions at the state level are virtually non-existent and should be further examined.

- Support the policy analysis and technical assistance necessary to make specific legislative and implementation recommendations aimed at Transitions/alignment
- Support the development of shared/early warning data systems across systems
- Support the development of individualized tools (texting, planning and consumer information) that educators can use with students
- Measure and refine transition zone interventions, models and theory of action

Summary

As greater authority over education has shifted to the states, the window of opportunity is ripe to demonstrate how cross-sector collaboration can lead to improved outcomes for students. Concurrently, the Foundation is having internal conversations about bridging opportunities for students, alignment of assessments and a more coordinated view of the work. The aforementioned recommended course of action gives us a place to begin operationalizing a transitions body of work.

Aggregate Cost-Benefit Analysis (attachment of memo)

Summer Melt (Mid-Level Achievers)

How many students impacted? An estimated, 10 to 40% of college-intending students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, fail to enroll in college the fall after graduation.⁹

Why Does This Occur? After acceptance many tasks still remain that are challenging for students with no counseling or outside resource for support. Tasks include financing higher education, bill paying, and budgeting for expenses such as health insurance and course textbooks. Students must also respond to several requests by colleges that include registering for orientation, taking placement tests and completing housing forms that students unfamiliar with the process find difficult to navigate.

Category	Navigation Approach	Cost Per Student	Expected College Enrollment Benefit (Melt) ¹⁰	Expected Persistence Benefit (Melt)
Personal	High School Counselors (Summer)	\$50-200	3% points higher, 8-12% higher for low-income students (Experimental)	5% more likely to be enrolled continuously enrolled through 3 semesters of college

⁹ Castleman & Page, 2014

¹⁰ All evidence is experimental. (Castleman, Arnold & Wartman, 2012; Arnold, Castleman, Chewning and Page, 2015; Owen & Page, 2015; Berman, Kane & Seng, 2012; Carrell & Sacerdote, 2013)

				(Experimental)
	Peer Mentors	\$80	4.5% points more likely to enroll in four-year college (Experimental)	Undetermined
	Local College Access Organizations (UAspire Boston)	\$150-200	5% points more likely to enroll immediately in college, compared to student who did not receive outreach. (Experimental)	9% points more likely to be enrolled continuously through the fall of sophomore year (Experimental)
Digital	Text Messaging Campaign	\$2	Overall enrollment increased from over 4.5 – 7.1 % points (Experimental)	Persistence from freshman to sophomore year 7.8% points higher (Experimental)
	Text Messaging Campaign with Follow-Up Counselor Support (Dallas ISD)	\$2-7	FRPL students 4% points more likely to enroll in college. Overall, the text campaign increased enrollment at two-year colleges by 5 % points (Experimental)	Undetermined

Undermatch (High-Achievers and Mid-Level achievers)

How many students impacted? 53% of low-income, high-achieving students apply to zero schools whose median SAT or ACT score are similar to their own. Only 8% of these student apply to selective schools.¹¹ National number of students impacted 10,000 to 20,000.

Why does this occur? Lack of access to information, overwhelmed by the process of parsing information on the volume of potential postsecondary options, desire to avoid onerous applications or attend institutions with certain amenities. For high-achieving, low-income students who are geographically isolated from other high achieving peers, college application choice mirrors those of socioeconomic peers. Issues of social

¹¹ Hoxby & Avery, 2013

belonging and students' overemphasis on aspects of their own identity rather than academic success.

Category	Navigation Approach	Cost Per Student	Expected College Enrollment	Expected 1 st Year Persistence Benefit
Customized	Semi-customized information on college application, college net costs and fee waivers	\$6	Per \$10 of cost, targeted students applied to 4 more colleges and were 50.5% more likely to apply a peer college (w/in their academic range) (Experimental) ¹²	Per \$10 students enrolled in colleges where graduation rates were 13 percentage points higher, institutional spending \$5906 higher, college assessment scores 65 points higher and 22.2 percentage points more likely to be peer colleges. (Experimental) Students induced to attend more selective colleges earned similar grades and persisted with similar probabilities than if they would have attended less selective college No Increase in college enrollment overall
Personal	In-person counseling (10 hours per student) ¹³	\$600	Per \$10 of cost, increased application to .006 more colleges and .18 more likely to enroll in highly selective colleges (Experimental) No statistically significant effects for high achieving low-income students.	Undetermined

¹² Hoxby & Turner, 2013

¹³ In-person counseling interventions have been found to be a much more cost-efficient method – especially towards improving college applications, admissions and enrollment of low-income, first-generation students – than reducing the cost of college through tuition reductions, grants or other forms of aid

Remedial Coursework

How many students impacted? Half of all undergraduates take at least one remedial course, among those who take any, the average is 2.6 remedial courses¹⁴. With an estimated 3 million students entering college each year, the national cost of remediation is \$7 billion dollars annually (\$2,333/student).

Why does this occur? Academic preparation is a long process that begins well before the end of high school. Nevertheless, there are academic challenges specific to the transition to college. High school graduation requirements are poorly aligned for college-level coursework, access to college preparatory coursework and college counseling are not equal at all schools, low-income and minority students have less opportunities to obtain the academic preparation needed for college and less “college knowledge” regarding what’s needed in the first place.

The following are two approaches to reducing remediation: 1) bringing high school work into college, 2) exposing students to college level work while still in high school.

Category	Initiative/Approach	Cost Per Student	Expected Reduction in Remediation	Expected Persistence Benefit
Academic	Early Remediation/Transitions Curricula: Incoming seniors receive readiness notification and take courses to improve readiness ¹⁵	Undetermined	CA EAP, reduced need for remediation by 6.1% in English and 4.1% in Math (Quasi-experimental) ¹⁶ Research is nascent. Results from TN SAILS study will be released shortly.	Undetermined
Academic	Dual Enrollment; High school students take college level classes,	Varied depending on price of	No randomized trials of dual enrollment	Mixed evidence. Few use of rigorous

¹⁴ Scott-Clayton, Crosta & Belfield, 2014

¹⁵ Students who either pass transitions course or score high enough on the exam (EAP, SAT, ACT, Local) can be exempt from PS placement and can take college-level courses depending on the policy

¹⁶ Howell, Kurlaender & Grodsky, 2010

	earn both HS and College Credits ¹⁷	courses, funding policies (charges to student, fees paid by college, fees paid by K-12, legislature appropriation)	CCRC and CUNY studies showed students w/ one or more dual-enrollment course, earned more credit, higher GPA (non-randomized) ¹⁸ No effect found in FL for high school or college outcomes (Speroni, 2011). (Quasi-experimental)	statistical methods. CUNY studies showed greater likelihood of persisting to a third semester in college (earning an addition three-quarters of credit (.77).
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¹⁷ Dual Enrollment is also a strategy to increase postsecondary affordability and reduce time to degree. The nature of the mechanism increases collaboration and coordination between both sectors

¹⁸ CCRC, FL 7.7% increase in enrollment, increase in first-semester GPA .23 points. CUNY, first-semester GPA .133 points higher